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POPULAR

OBJECTIONS TO METHODISM

CONSIDERED AND ANSWERED:

OR

THE CONVERT'S COUNSELLOR

RESPECTING HIS CHURCH RELATIONS:

WITH REASONS WHY METHODIST CONVERTS SHOULD JOIN A METHODIST CHURCH.

AN ANTIDOTE TO CERTAIN RECENT PUBLICATIONS ASSAILING THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

BY DANIEL WISE,

Author of Young Man's Counsellor, Young Lady's Counsellor, Path of Life, &c., &c.

SIXTH THOUSAND.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

My first intention, when gathering materials for this work, was to write a full and complete answer to all the points raised by certain recent writers against our church. A little reflection, however, convinced me that such a task was needless. 1. Their writings do not reach many of our people. 2. If they did, their absurdity, falsity, and bad spirit are so obvious, that none of our members, if at all acquainted with Methodism, could be alienated from it by what they contain. 3. There is no probability that our enemies, who accept those writings, would go to the expense of purchasing such a reply, if written; for such persons do not wish to be convinced of their falsehood. 4. The only mischief likely to accrue to our church from their circulation, arises from the oral propagation of their more salient assertions among those who, having received Christ at our altars, and being as yet but partially acquainted with our system, are the objects of an unscrupulous proselytism. Hence it appeared to

me, that a small book delineating the prominent features of our system, especially at those points most virulently assailed, would meet the case better than a large and elaborate polemic. I therefore determined to write an *antidote* rather than a *formal answer* to those books; to make a work which, placed in the hands of a harassed convert, would say to him just those things which his pastor would like to say had he time and opportunity, and which, being said, would effectually fortify him against the influences of proselytism.

Whether I have realized my ideal, or not, the public must now judge. I have written in a style and manner adapted to the capacities of young persons; and have illustrated my points, as much as the subjects treated permitted, for the purpose of making them attractive. My earnest desire is, that the work may be instrumental in saving many converts to the Methodist church and to Christ.

DANIEL WISE.

ROXBURY, MARCH 1856

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THE CONVERT'S COUNSELLOR.

CHAPTER I.

DUTY OF CONVERTS TO JOIN THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

HRISTIAN reader, will you give me your attention, and permit me to commune with you awhile, in the spirit of a friend and fellow disciple? We are strangers to each other in the flesh, but are we not united in holy brotherhood, through our mutual faith in Jesus? Do not our hearts beat in hallowed sympathy, as we bow together in spirit, at the feet of Him whose death was our life, whose love is our consolation, whose promises are the light of our steps? Accept, then, my hand, with a brother's heart in it.

Give me your confidence. You are a young pilgrim just entering the way of life. I entered that sacred path in my youth. For nearly twenty-five years I have journeyed in it. I have mingled much with men, have seen life in many phases, have enjoyed much, suffered much. I know somewhat, therefore, of the human heart, and have gathered some of the fruits of experience. Viewing you as a convert just entering upon novel experiences, subjected to manifold temptations, doubtful of yourself, anxious to do right, yet liable to be misled, I feel my heart warm toward you, and am desirous to give you such counsels as I *know* will benefit you, if you accept and follow them. Will you then give me your attention and confidence?

I address you as recently converted, but as undecided concerning your church relations. You have been led to Christ, I will presume, through the instrumentality of Methodism. If left to your own unbiased

judgment, you would unhesitatingly unite with the Methodist church. But your associates, relatives, or personal friends are hostile to Methodism. Perhaps you reside in a community where Methodism is crushed down and trodden under foot by proud, influential, sectarian men. False views of Methodism, the offsprings of a prejudice which is willingly ignorant of its true character and spirit, are whispered in your ears. So much is said to you, by persons you have ever esteemed, that your mind is perplexed and unsettled. You hesitate and wait. You do not feel entirely free to relinquish Methodism. You are too deeply indebted to it to turn from it readily; yet in consequence of what has been said to you by others, your mind is not satisfied with respect to your duty to enter into church relation with it. Like a weaver's shuttle, you are tossed to and fro, and amid these perplexities, you are tempted to join no church at all.

Permit me to be plain with you at this point, my dear young friend. The suggestion to join *no* church is from the great adversary of your soul. The friends who harass you that they may alienate you from Methodism, are responsible for so disturbing your wonted serenity as to fit you for the solicitations of the tempter. But you must resist him, nevertheless. You *must* join some branch of the visible church of Christ. Not to do so is to peril the safety of your soul.

Some time ago, a bold but reckless seaman determined to attempt the passage of the Atlantic alone in an open boat. It was a daring thought, but he was strong in purpose, and he made the trial successfully. Alone in his frail bark, he crossed the mighty deep, braved all its dangers, outrode its storms, and landed safely on the opposite shore.

Since then, a noble steamship, like leviathan for size, like the eagle for swiftness,

like behemoth for strength, while attempting the same passage, rushed upon an unseen vessel. The concussion opened the steamer's gigantic bosom to the waves, and like a dead monster of the deep, she sunk, with scores of her affrighted voyagers, to the invisible caverns of the seas.

Thus a voyage which was safely made by a solitary seaman in an open boat, proved fatal to scores who attempted it in a noble steamship. But would you, therefore, prefer the open boat to the steamer if you were about to cross the ocean?

You would not. Reasoning upon these facts, you would say, that the seaman in the open boat was foolhardy. The probabilities were all against him. His exploit is not fit to be imitated, for it could hardly be repeated by himself or any other man. Of the steamship, you would say the few who perished by her fatal mishap were exceptions. Most who cross the seas in such vessels do so with safety, and, therefore, the

steamship is infinitely preferable to the open boat.

Do you not perceive the application of these illustrations to the question which now perplexes you? Do you think of sailing over the sea of life alone, without the fellowship of the visible church? Behold the folly of such a purpose in the rashness of that daring seaman. Like him, you may, after many frightful experiences, land safely on the bright shore beyond. But alas, all the probabilities are against you. You are more likely to be wrecked beneath some treacherous wave, than to outsail the perils of the voyage. Thus reason points you toward the church. Experience directs to the same path. Of the many who have attempted a voyage to heaven out of the Christian church, nearly all have lost their way, while yet almost in sight of the point of their departure. On the contrary, though some who join the visible church, do, like HYMENEUS and ALEXANDER, make shipwreck

of faith, yet the far greater number outride every storm, and land safely on the shore beyond the flood. All experience declares in favor of the safety of seeking heaven by way of the church: it shows the attempt to reach it independent of the church to be perilous in the extreme. Hence your desire to make your salvation as sure as possible, if guided by the voices of reason and experience, will lead you to unite with some branch of the Christian church.

Along the channels leading to harbors of difficult approach, it is not uncommon to see lines of painted buoys. Those silent but restless monitors serve the weary mariner as guides and protectors. Though voiceless, they assure him that the citizens of that port have sounded those waters and placed those lines of buoys to intimate that it is safe to steer within them, but dangerous to sail without them. Wisely heedful of their teaching, he guides his bark along the channel and enters the haven with a

joyous heart. Were he blindly unmindful of their presence; were he, in a spirit of self-conceited vanity, to despise them, and run his ship upon sunken rocks or treacherous banks, who would pity him? Would not all men blame him for his folly? Would he not stand silent and self condemned in presence of a blabbing world?

Now, as these buoys authoritatively, yet kindly, point out the only safe course for the sea-worn mariner, so the existence of the visible church, erected and preserved by Christ himself, is a divine proclamation, that through its sacred portals the only safe path to heaven runs. Would Jesus have founded it, joined his first disciples to it, called it his "body," "loved it," and preserved it, as by a perpetual miracle even against the "gates of hell," if it were not necessary to the salvation of his followers? Did its institution spring from the suggestions of caprice, or was it the outgrowth of his wisdom and love? *You* will surely

acknowledge it to be the latter. How then can you neglect to join yourself to it, without despising his wisdom, exhibiting a measure of *self-will* utterly unbecoming in a disciple, risking your salvation, and exposing yourself to the fate of him whose scornful rejection of the wedding garment overwhelmed him with speechless shame, when he was arraigned at the tribunal of his offended Lord?

Nor can you refuse to join the visible church without at least a show of unkindness, utterly inconsistent with that love for Christ which you profess. It is the nature of love to yield itself to the wishes of its object. Love is obedient. It does not hesitate to do, to suffer, or to die, if need be, to please its beloved. What a poor starveling your love will appear, if you decline to submit to the undoubted will of Christ on a point which, while it requires no real sacrifice, is almost absolutely necessary to your salvation. Your refusal must at least expose

your profession of love to merited suspicion.

Besides, if you stand unconnected with the visible church, how can you "eat the body" and "drink the blood" of Christ? "*Do this in remembrance of me.*" is not a mere request: it is a *command.* If it were only a whispered wish, your affection for Christ should lead you to regard it as an imperial law. But it is more than a wish. It is an unconditional command, invested with peculiar sacredness, because given on the eve of that awful hour, which witnessed the dying agonies of your Saviour. A wish to evade it is treason to Christ. *You* cannot therefore desire to neglect it. But how can you obey it unless you become a member of the visible church? for it is not a secret commemoration of his death that he requires, but an open partaking of its emblems in the company of his disciples. Are you not therefore bound to become a member

of the visible church, by the command which bids you partake of the holy supper?

It is not uncommon for converts, harassed as I suppose you to be, about their church relation, to be tempted to say: "I would join the church if there was only *one* denomination. But I am confused because of the multitude of sects, claiming to be churches of Christ; therefore, I will join none."

Fallacious conclusion! Behold its folly. Yonder is a man intending to cross the seas. Seeking a ship, he finds the wharves crowded with every variety of craft — schooner, brig, ship, clipper, and steamship. The owners of each insist on the superiority of their particular vessel. After hearing their pleas, the intending voyager exclaims, "There are so many vessels, I am confused. I know not which to select. I will sail in neither of them. I will *swim* across the seas alone!"

Now, I know you pronounce this resolution absurd in the highest degree — too ab-

surd for any sane man to adopt. Common sense, you think, would teach such a man to select that craft which his judgment, after due examination, most approved. Exactly so. Go then, beloved convert, and follow the dictates of sound common sense with respect to the multitude of sects around you. Their number and variety result from the necessary diversity of human opinions; and, constituted as the human mind is, their multiplicity is probably a good rather than an evil. Let not this fact stumble you, therefore, but after a due investigation of their respective claims, select the one which your judgment can best approve, and join yourself to its communion. Remember your safety, your duty, your obligations to Christ, all bind you to become a member of the visible church.

"And THE LORD ADDED *to the church daily such as should be saved.*"

"*I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*"

CHAPTER II.

METHODIST CONVERTS SHOULD JOIN A METHODIST CHURCH.

HAIL you, dear reader, as a *child of Methodism.* Your parents may have educated you in a different faith. Your past associations may have been with the followers of another creed. Your personal friends may worship at other altars. Nevertheless, having been converted to Christ through Methodist instrumentalities, *you* are a child of Methodism! God sent Methodism to you, as he sent Ananias to Saul of Tarsus, that it might become your spiritual parent. It found you a poor unawakened sinner. It alarmed you, persuaded you, led you to the cross, taught you how to believe, en-

couraged your first acts of trust, and led you, with the solicitude of a mother, through the earliest steps of your experience in the way of faith. Under God, you owe your spiritual life to it. Are you not, then, one of the children of Methodism? Is not the Methodist church your spiritual mother?

Did it ever strike you that there is a *providence* in this delightful relation between you and Methodism? It must be so, for so important a fact as your spiritual parentage could not have been left to *chance*. As a Christian, you utterly eschew the notion of chance. You recognise the guiding hand of God in every event, both great and small, from the upholding of the spheres to the fall of a sparrow. You must, therefore, concede that providence was directly concerned in bringing you into your very interesting relationship with Methodism. Perhaps a little reflection, on the various steps by which you have been led, will unfold to your mind numerous combinations

of events, all tending to this result, and demonstrating the presence of an invisible but Almighty agency. Can you explain the facts of your recent history on any other principle? If you deny it, are they not mysterious and inexplicable — a tangled labyrinth which you cannot explore? But if you admit it, everything, though wonderful and overwhelming, is at least intelligible and plain. Ought you not then to consider that the providence of God, made you the spiritual child of Methodism?

But does not this fact teach its lesson? May it not shed some light on the question of your church relation? Is there no indication of the divine will in these mysterious leadings of his providence? Why did your Heavenly Father select a Methodist preacher to be the instrument of your awakening, and a Methodist altar to be the scene of your conversion? He could have led you within the sphere of other, perhaps nearer, instrumentalities. Why then did He lead

you rather out of their way, and bring you into spiritual relationship with the great Methodist family, if not to teach you that your spiritual interests could be better promoted within its bosom than elsewhere? I will not positively affirm that this is the lesson of the fact, because I can conceive of exceptional cases, in which it would not be proper for a convert to join the church of his spiritual parentage; but I do sincerely submit this question to your judgment: Do not those providences which brought you within the influence of Methodism, give at least an intimation, that it is the divine will you should fix your spiritual home within its enclosures? I beg you to resolve this question on your knees.

By uniting with the church which has been the instrument of your conversion, you will meet with a spiritual sympathy such as you can hardly expect to find in another denomination.

As a young convert you stand in special

need of the *sympathy* and aid of spiritual minds. This need will continue until your experience matures, and you acquire strength through conflict and endurance. Your faith is weak and vacillating — a reed shaken by the wind. Your love, though glowing, is wavering — a flame flickering in a draught of air. In strength, you are a lamb shivering in the chilly atmosphere of an ungenial spring. In skill to resist the Tempter, you are as an inexperienced youth walking amidst the snares of practiced wickedness. Thus feeble and harassed, you often sink into "great deeps" of despondency, where a "horror of great darkness," like that which fell on the patriarch Abraham, encompasses your trembling spirit. Then, you challenge the reality of your conversion, and are ready to "cast away your confidence." Then, like a frighted child, you need to be folded in the warm breast of Christian sympathy, that your fear may be calmed, your heart cheered into a renewal of your acts of faith, by the

whispers of a tender and patient brotherly affection.

Now, where will you be so likely to find this sympathy as with those who regard you as their spiritual child? They have witnessed the process of your conversion, entered into your feelings, mingled their tears with yours, struggled with you in the agonies of your penitential hour, soared with you on the wings of faith to the Mediator's feet, and blended their voices with yours in the first songs of praise which broke from your renewed heart. Hence, they love you as the child of their labors and affections. They have confidence in your profession of faith. They are eminently fitted to sympathize with you, to weep over your sorrows and to rejoice over your joys. Is it *prudent* to tear yourself away from such sympathy? Is it *safe?*

I do not affirm that you cannot find genuine Christian sympathy in a church of another name, because wherever there is true piety

there is more or less of sympathy with the lambs of Christ's flock. But I do seriously doubt the probability of your finding *such* sympathy as you now enjoy in the house of your spiritual parentage. Remember, that being a child of Methodism, you will be but an *adopted child* in any other branch of the Christian church. You will feel this fact painfully, if you leave your true home. So long as you are the object of a zealous proselytism, the confidence and sympathy of those who seek to win you to their ranks will appear strong and deep. But when you have once crossed the Rubicon, and stand among them as a candidate for church membership, a change will be visible in the spirit of your new friends. Having lured you from Methodism, they will seek to divest you of every shred of the Methodistic garment, and to shape the manifestations of your experience in their own denominational mold. They will scrutinize your conversion, and challenge its genuineness, because it was obtained among

the Methodists. It will be well if they do not lead you to cast it aside as mere excitement, and leave you to grope through mist and unbelief after new light, so that, after all, you may date your new birth from the period of your connection with them, and thus lose your sense of obligation to your true spiritual parent. But if you should escape so severe an ordeal, you will, at least, be speedily taught by significant shrugs and chilling glances, if not by direct rebuke, that allusions to your indebtedness to Methodism are regarded as a mark of bad taste, as an offense, as a sign of disloyalty to your new friends. In a word, you will have to ignore your spiritual parentage or be regarded as a speckled bird, an oddity, to be endured but not received to the entire confidence of the church.

Perhaps you think these remarks are the outflowings of prejudice on the part of the writer. I assure you they are not. I love and respect every branch of the Christian church, and believe that multitudes among

them would scorn to do such things as I have described. But facts are stubborn things; and they prove that the *animus* of the leading Calvinist denominations is decidedly unfriendly to Methodism — so unfriendly as to look upon it with a certain affectation of contempt, and to speak incredulously, if not with absolute doubt, of the genuineness of its religious experiences

The existence of this unfriendly *animus* is proved by certain recent publications, and the manner in which they have been received by the denominations they represent. In one of these works, written by a prominent Congregationalist minister,* it is boldly asserted that "Methodism is not a branch of the church of Christ;" that "its aggression is not one of a true religion but of a false;" that Methodist revivals are "simply corruptions of revivals," "no part of Christianity, but scandals in its way;" that they constitute "what may be called a *religious com-*

* Rev. Parsons Cooke.

edy;" that they are "comic operations;" and that of Methodist conversions about *nine-tenths of the whole* are found to be *spurious* after a longer or shorter trial!!"

Now the volume which contains these statements has been endorsed by most of the leading presses of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches, and by many of their chief ministers and home missionaries in various parts of the country. I know there are numerous individuals in those denominations, who dissent strongly from the views of this writer: yet their dissent cannot be *general,* it cannot exist in the most influential quarters, or it would find expression in earnest protests through the press. The fact that no such protest has appeared, except in a single instance in which the protestant was originally a Methodist minister, taken in connection with the endorsements it has received, proves that the animus of that book is in harmony with the animus of the above named churches.

Another volume from the pen of a Baptist minister,* written in the same spirit, and placing Methodism outside the pale of Evangelism, has been received with similar favor among the Baptists.

These are melancholy facts, which it is painful even to record. I do not name them to create prejudices in your breast against Christians of other churches, but merely to sustain what has been said concerning their views of Methodist conversions. They do cherish a great doubt concerning the genuineness of a Methodist conversion. How, then, can you, who are a Methodist convert, go among them without having the soundness of *your* conversion doubted? without being subjected to a suspicious scrutiny which it is painful to an honorable mind to endure? How, under such circumstances, can you hope to find that spiritual sympathy in their communions which is one of the great wants of your

* The Great Iron Wheel, by Rev. J. R. Graves.

renewed life? Plainly you cannot. Are you, then, at liberty to put your salvation in peril by rushing from the warm atmosphere of love and sympathy which now surrounds you, into one of cold and unsympathizing scrutiny and suspicion?

A poet has given beautiful expression to the desire which carries an inexperienced youth to sea, and which is succeeded by a desire to return home a thousand fold more intense, in the following lines:

> "See how from port the vessel glides,
> With streamered masts o'er halcyon tides:
> Its laggard course the sea-boy chides,
> All loth that calms should bind him;
> But distance only chains him more
> With love links to his native shore,
> And sleep's best dream is to restore
> The home he left behind him."

In my walks as a pastor, I have met with many persons whose experience in the matter of their church relation resembled that of the poet's "sea-boy." When they were young converts, the attentions of influ-

ential men, the appeal to their vanity which was conveyed in the attempt to proselyte them, the idea of finding a culture or a social status superior to Methodism, filled them with desire, like that of the sea-boy, to leave the sunny port of Methodism, where they were converted, and to enter another church. But once away from their true spiritual home, like the sea-boy, they missed its genial spirit, its warm, hearty sympathies, and yet felt bound to it by "love-links" they could not break. They regretted what they had done, yet did not feel free to retrace their steps. They were unsatisfied and ill at ease in the relation they had chosen, and longed for a fair opportunity to return to their true spiritual home. And such, beloved reader, may be your experience if you suffer yourself to be beguiled from your true spiritual home by any motive lower than a conviction of duty.

I have said that Providence, by giving you your spiritual parentage in the house of

Methodism, *indicated* its will concerning your true church home. I say *indicated* because there may be circumstances which would render it improper for a convert to unite with the church which led him to Christ. Should that church, for example, hold doctrines which he does not believe, it could not be his duty to join it. To profess faith in dogmas which the understanding rejects, is a violation of the law of truth. Whoever does so, corrupts his moral nature and offends God. Hence, in determining your church relation, you are solemnly bound to consider the question of creeds. Should you deliberately profess a creed which you do not heartily believe, you would certainly peril, if not assuredly forfeit, your peace of mind. You must be honest before God.

"I had rather every hair of my head were burned, if it were never so much worth, than that I should forsake my faith and opinion, which is the true faith."

Such was the noble utterance of AGNES

Stanley, when she stood in presence of Bishop Bonner, charged with heresy and threatened with martyrdom. A fiery death awaited her if she persisted in maintaining her opinions. Life and liberty were hers, would she but profess a faith she did not believe. But her noble soul spurned a life which could not be retained except at the price of falsehood. And for simply maintaining her convictions, she passed through the fires of Smithfield to the realms of ineffable delight.

Was Agnes Stanley right? Was it worth while to sacrifice life for opinion's sake? Aye, it was. Had she through fear of death, stained her soul with falsehood, she would have forfeited self-respect, the admiration of the good, and the favor of God.

But if Agnes Stanley did right, what shall we say of those modern Christians who profess a creed they do not believe? I have frequently referred members of Calvinist churches to their creeds and covenants,

as teaching ultra Calvinism, and they have replied, "O, we don't believe that. We think pretty much as you do." Alas, what a dull perception of the claims of truth and honor such replies imply! The parties had publicly, solemnly, consciously, professed a creed which their understandings rejected. Their profession was therefore a perpetual lie. Such minds would have no trouble with Bishop Bonner. The fires of Smithfield would never fright them. The spirit of Agnes Stanley is not in them. Can you desire to tread in their steps?

Now, I take it for granted that in *doctrine* you are a Methodist. You believe in the great truth of universal atonement. You believe that Jesus "tasted death for every man;" that grace, quickening and saving, is tendered to every man, rendering every man morally able to accept the Saviour; that freedom from the guilt and dominion of sin, is attainable in this life, and that a truly converted man may so fall away as to finally

perish. Believing these truths, I do not see how you can join a Calvinist church without incurring the guilt of a *perpetual lie!* For Calvinism teaches altogether another doctrine. Its atonement, though nominally universal, is in fact an atonement for the *elect only*, because none else can by any possibility be saved by it. It teaches that effectual or saving grace is given to the elect alone; that sin must retain a measure of its power over a believer so long as he remains in the flesh; and that when once a man is truly converted, his final salvation is a certainty — he cannot fall so as to finally perish. To these odious doctrines you must subscribe if you enter a Calvinist church. Its creed may be written so as to keep its most offensive dogmas in the shade, but its *construction* is as I have stated. If then you are a Methodist in your doctrinal opinions, you cannot subscribe to the creed of a Calvinist church without setting your hand to a deliberate falsehood. Are you not then bound by the

dictates of truth and honor to unite with the Methodist church?

Let me illustrate this point with a fact. I knew a gentleman who, at the time of his conversion, was solicited to unite with a Calvinist church. He objected, saying: "My doctrinal opinions are not in harmony with your articles of faith."

"O, never mind that," replied the pastor. "I will represent you to the Committee. You need not appear before them at all."

Satisfied with this acceptance of his protest against its Calvinism, he consented to join the church. But when he presented himself for that purpose, the creed and covenant were read to him, and he found he was expected to give his assent to opinions against which he had uttered his solemn protest to the pastor. He felt like one entrapped. But, hesitating to explain himself so publicly, he reluctantly yielded to the circumstances, and was admitted to the church.

Still his conscience was ill at ease. He was dissatisfied both with himself and his pastor. With himself, because he was professing doctrines which his understanding rejected; with his pastor, for having caught him with guile. Many and severe were his mental struggles as to his duty. At length, being moved to make an entire consecration of himself to God, he saw clearly that he must either renounce his false doctrinal profession, or to use his own words, "go to hell." He hesitated no longer. He broke the chain which bound him to a Calvinist church, found peace of mind, united with a Methodist church, and subsequently became a preacher of the gospel. That he did right in thus honestly conforming his profession to his faith, you will not deny. What then? Go thou, and do likewise.

You must, above all things, maintain your integrity. Depend upon it there is safety in the *path of duty* only.

CHAPTER III.

MEANS OF GRACE PECULIAR TO METHODISM.

HEN the ancient Crusader, inflamed with desire to rescue the Holy Land from the sceptre of the Saracen, consecrated himself to that romantic enterprise, he at once threw his whole soul into the work of preparation. Regarding his pilgrimage as the grand object of his life, he sacrificed every other interest and affection at its shrine. He forsook his dearest friends; sold his domains; alienated his rights of sovereignty; and lavished his gold that he might contribute to the success of the crusade. In making preparation for his military duties, he purchased armor of proof, weapons of truest temper, steeds of highest mettle; he selected for his leaders men of true courage and sagacity, and chose

a route most likely to lead him speedily and safely to the scene of conflict. Thus he surrendered everything to the claim of his soul's ideal of duty and glory.

May you not, beloved convert, learn a lesson from the Crusader's spirit? Does not his action exhibit, in bold relief, the principle which should guide you in determining your church relation? Like him you have consecrated yourself to a great life work — an infinitely greater work than his. His object was to stand a conqueror on the spot of his Lord's crucifixion; yours is to stand victorious before the throne of your Saviour's glory. If his ideal led him to make stern sacrifices, and to adopt a course of self-discipline adapted to the end he had chosen for himself, ought not yours to bind you to similar sacrifices and discipline? Ought you not to subject all your actions to the demands of your purpose to reach heaven? Ought not all your voluntary relations to society to be determined by the

question of their fitness to contribute to your great life aim? Above all, should not your church relation be settled by the adaptation of the particular church you may select to promote your salvation?

If to these interrogatories you respond affirmatively, you are bound to select a church home with that body of Christians, whose spirit, usages, and institutions are best fitted to aid you in working out your salvation. The social status, the wealth, the culture of a church, are inferior and subordinate questions; though too many converts, to their great spiritual loss, have allowed them to be controlling and decisive. I hope better things of *you*. I take you to be an earnest convert, to whom "all things" are "loss," if you may but "win Christ." You will, therefore, be governed by the question, which church is best fitted by its peculiar institutions, doctrines, and spirit to help me to heaven?

Now if you take this principle for your

guide, I have no doubt of its leading you into the Methodist Episcopal Church. Within her enclosures, in addition to all that is valuable in the preaching and ordinances common to all Christian denominations, you will find some precious advantages, which you cannot find outside the pale of Methodism. I will name some of them.

You will find in Methodism such a degree of direct and habitual culture of the great *elements of the Christian life*, as is found in no other denomination.

The Christian life consists chiefly in the exercise of right affections toward God. I do not affirm that it includes nothing more than love, because an enlightened understanding, a submissive will, and an obedient life, are essential to it, and are, in fact, included in it. But I do assert that love to God, as manifested in Christ, is the principal element of the Christian life. "Love," says WESLEY, "is the end, the sole end of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world

to the consummation of all things;" and the apostle John observes, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." So that he who loves has spiritual life. He who loves not is a stranger to that life, is dead to God, is not born of God, has not spiritual vitality.

But this love is the offspring of faith, depends upon faith, grows or declines, as faith is stronger or weaker. The truth which faith grasps is the germ of love. The divine message which faith receives, the glorious facts to which it gives credence, constitute the food which stimulates love and secures its growth. Without faith, love could not have birth or growth in the human soul. Hence, faith and love are the two grand elements of the Christian life. He who believes most earnestly, and with the most simplicity, will love most. He who has the strongest faith and the warmest love will have the most spiritual vitality, will grow most rapidly in moral power and beauty.

Now, if you look carefully into the history of Methodism, you will find that it has, from the beginning, given singular attention to the cultivation of these two grand elements of the Christian life. 1. In its preaching, its literature, its hymns, in its devotional services, in the lives of its founders and representative minds, it has always urged the duty of an earnest, undoubting reception of the truth, with singular intensity. Its preaching has entrenched itself in the religious consciousness of its hearers, to which it has invariably appealed with an authority which has proved itself irresistible, and *commanded*, so to speak, the belief of men in the inspiration of the word of God. An unshrinking faith in the divine word, accompanied by a simple, unrestrained personal affection for God in Christ — "an individualized spiritual life" — has been the most striking characteristic of its teachings, from the day of Mr. Wesley's conversion until now. 2. While it has not neglected to in-

struct its disciples in those great theological truths which enlighten the understanding, and teach men to conceive right views of divine things, it has given especial attention to the culture of religious experience — of emotional piety. Other denominations have trusted chiefly to the effect of doctrinal and ethical disquisitions, without seeking to stimulate their hearers to the exercise of faith and love by direct exhortation and personal persuasion. Methodism does both. It unfolds the truth. It also habitually enforces it with tears, entreaties, exhortations. It struggles to relieve men of their doubts and fears, and urges them to cast their helpless spirits fearlessly upon God in Christ, as on the bosom of a Father, who is not merely willing, but infinitely anxious to save. The result of this has hitherto been a stronger, more cheerful faith, a more marked experience, a deeper religious emotion, stronger affection for God, than have been common in other bodies of Christians.

The peculiar doctrines of Methodism have also a direct tendency to stimulate the Christian life, and thereby to promote its growth.

By using the phrase "peculiar doctrines of Methodism," I do not wish it to be understood that Methodism has introduced any novelties into her theology. No. The doctrines of Methodism are as old as the gospel. Jesus taught them. So did his apostles and their successors, through the purest periods of the history of the church. Many of the "Reformers," also, both in England and Germany, were able advocates of her characteristic doctrines. They are not novelties, therefore; though viewed in relation to the churches which follow the theological system of John Calvin, and to their distinct, earnest enunciation, many of them are now peculiar to Methodism.

These peculiar tenets have a beautiful, Scriptural fitness to promote faith and love in the hearts of men. By teaching the death of Jesus to be the price of the gracious pro-

bation, granted to the human race for the express purpose of restoring to righteousness as many as would consent to be regenerated by the Divine Spirit, Methodism exhibits the character of God in a light so just, so impartial, so loving, so earnest to save, that men have little ground left to cavil or to doubt, and none to presume; while they are powerfully moved to love and seek God, who is seen to be at once both good and just. By its clear enunciation of the doctrines of justification by faith only, of the witness of the Spirit, of the possibility of complete victory over sin, it awakens the hopes, satisfies the aspirations, and encourages the efforts of such as seek to be Christians indeed. By its theory of the possibility of falling from grace so as to finally perish, it erects a strong barrier against the return of a believer to his old sins. Thus its views of truth give it an immense advantage over those churches which teach the dogmas of Calvin — dogmas which exhibit God in an as-

pect so repulsive, so uncertain as to whom he is willing to save, so partial to his selected favorites, so unjust to the reprobated, and so concealed even from his elect, that it must be exceedingly difficult to lead men to exercise saving faith, and almost impossible to awaken that simple, peaceful, trustful love, which is the essence of the Christian life, and the glory of Methodist "church-life."—The result of this advantage is seen in her superior growth. Her peculiar doctrines being peculiarly scriptural, are peculiarly efficacious in bringing men to Christ and leading them to heaven.

The peculiar institutions of Methodism are also eminently fitted to develope the elements of the Christian life.

The Christian life, like life in all its forms, is active. Its tendency is to activity. It always seeks to expend its forces in its legitimate sphere. Repel this tendency, check this force, and it will roll back upon itself and die. To be healthfully developed

it must be permitted to flow out in fit expression, in praise, in acknowledgment, in acts of obedience, in works of benevolence, in the performance of duty. This is its law, and it must be obeyed.

Methodism has always recognized this important principle. It is incorporated into its very organization, and its peculiar institutions are therefore admirably fitted to develop the spiritual life of its members. Look at its class meetings, and love feasts: how they educate the believer to form the habit of giving expression to the conceptions of faith, and the raptures of love. How they lure him to obey that first prompting of the religious life, to attempt the salvation of others, of which every true disciple is conscious. How suggestive, too, of social duties are those meetings, providing as they do an opportunity for the confession of faults, the utterances of desire, and the admonitions of wisdom. So, also, the Methodistic prayer meeting is an arena for the development

of the spiritual life. It is a battle-field, in which every member is taught to win souls, to fight for the extension of Christ's kingdom. Lay preaching is also productive of much enlargement to the spiritual life of Methodism. By introducing thousands of valuable minds into spheres of activity, it developes their life, and leads to the increase of that life in others. Nor is the itinerancy of Methodism without its influence in this direction. By the frequent introduction of new pastors into its pulpits, it ensures the constant, varied, energetic enunciation of those great fundamental truths of our holy religion, which, applied by the Divine Spirit, become the germ and nutriment of the divine life to those who receive them.

We doubt if the constant preaching of these great, central, saving truths is possible to a settled ministry, which is compelled to distribute general truths, and occupy itself with single points, to avoid sameness and repetition. But the itinerancy of Methodism

keeps them before its congregations, the same in substance, but in ever varied forms of expression and diverse modes of illustration, and thereby becomes a powerful means of stimulating the growth of the spiritual life. Thus, all that is peculiar to the Methodistic organization, is strikingly — may I not add philosophically? — adapted to develop the Christian life.

In its provision for the cultivation of the *highest forms of Christian fellowship*, Methodism stands peerless among the churches.

One great purpose of Christianity is to unite mankind in bonds of holy fellowship with God and with one another. How beautifully and tenderly this idea is brought to view in the sacerdotal prayer of Christ, where he asks for his disciples, "*That they all may be* ONE; *as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be* ONE IN US * * * *That they may be one,* EVEN AS WE ARE ONE!!"

The fellowship portrayed in this passage

is no cold, formal, heartless unity, but communion and sympathy in the highest possible degree,— such communion as exists between the Father and the Son, "*That they may be one*, EVEN AS WE ARE ONE." What ineffable, delightful fellowship is this! "It implies," says FOOTE, in his School of Christ, "sympathy, oneness of mind, mutual understanding and agreement, familiar and friendly intercourse, the responsive beat of heart to heart, soul answering to soul, as face answers to face in water"—"a fellowship of love to an unseen Saviour, a fellowship of joys, hopes and fears, that lie quite beyond the circle of a natural man's experience."

This prayer of Christ finds constant and universal utterance in the spiritual aspirations of his true disciples. One of the first desires of the converted mind is for such fellowship. "O!" it exclaims, "that I had some one in whom I might discern the reflection of my own soul, and from whom I might receive back again the expression of

my own confiding affection!" It was this aspiration, unchecked by cold suspicion, which led the primitive converts to Christianity to seek that affectionate communion which is so glowingly described by the annalist of the apostles. "Knit together in love," they met in bands, "continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking of bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." They spoke to each other in "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," rejoiced with those that did rejoice, and wept with those that wept. They "exhorted one another daily," bore "one another's burdens," confessed their "faults one to another," and prayed "one for another." Thus they enjoyed the "communion of saints" in a very high degree; and, by their practice, illustrated the method of the spiritual life, wherever it is permitted to unfold itself unhindered by unscriptural prejudices and unevangelical customs.

If you consult the biography of deeply

pious men, of any sect, you will find them, when in their healthiest state of mind, seeking this sort of intercourse with their fellow Christians. Mr. Wesley shortly after his conversion was so anxious for the fellowship of experienced Christians, that he actually made a journey from England to Germany, that he might enjoy it with the followers of Count Zinzendorf, at Hernhutt. His motives are stated in his journal in these words:—

"My weak mind could not thus bear to be sawn asunder. And I hoped the conversing with those holy men who were themselves living witnesses to the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with those that are weak, would be a means under God, of so establishing my soul, that I might go on from faith to faith, and from strength to strength."

The same desire led Dr. Chalmers to form a very close spiritual intimacy with his friend Mr. J. Anderson. With this gen-

tleman Dr. C. enjoyed a very intimate religious fellowship. Their intercourse aimed at the very thing which the Methodist class meeting is designed to accomplish, — the communication of religious experience. Dr. C. was led to practice it at first, by the impulses of his spiritual life. In the following passage he defends it with the skill of a philosopher.

"I am very much interested in the progress of your sentiments. This, in the language of good but despised Christians, is called the communication of *your religious experience.* There is fanaticism annexed to the term; but this is a mere bugbear; and I count it strange that that very evidence which is held in such exclusive respect in every other department of inquiry, should be so despised and laughed at when applied to the progress of a human being in that greatest of all transitions, from a state of estrangement to a state of intimacy with God; from the terror of His condemnation to an affecting

sense of His favor, and friendship, and reconciled presence; from the influence of earthly and debasing affections, to the influence of those new and heavenly principles which the Spirit of God establishes in the heart of every believer. This is what our Saviour calls 'passed from death unto life.' My prayer for both of us is, that 'it may be made sure,' and that 'hereby we may know that He dwelleth in us and we in Him, that he hath given us of His Spirit.'"—*Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers*, vol. i., p. 255.

It was to meet this want of the spiritual life, that MR. WESLEY introduced the CLASS MEETING into the organism of Methodism. He knew that the spiritual life of believers could not be healthfully developed unless they enjoyed constant fellowship with each other, and he knew also, that the cultivation of such fellowship is a scriptural duty. To provide opportunity for its culture, and to prevent its neglect by his followers, he established this meeting. He did not pretend to

claim *divine authority* for it; for, in the "minutes," he classed it with "*prudential*," and not with "*instituted*" means of grace. But it stands so intimately related to, and is so necessary to the proper growth of the spiritual life, that regular attendance upon it has always been one of the "regulations" which the M. E. Church has required her members to observe.

There can be no doubt, that the piety of Methodism owes much of its characteristic fervor and animation to the influences of its class meetings. The peculiar feature of the class is the provision it makes for the free *communication of religious experience*. Its members, in a spirit of frank, affectionate simplicity, unfold the workings of the divine life as developed in their several experiences. They are thus led to discover the identity of the work wrought in their hearts by the self same Spirit. If one is depressed, tempted, or crushed, he learns that his temptations are not peculiar

to himself. Others have felt, resisted, conquered them; why may not he? If one is elevated, he finds his joy reciprocated; while his happy experience encourages his companions to seek like enlargement of heart. If one has erred, the persuasive sympathy of his brethren melts him to penitence; their prayers aid him to return to the waiting Shepherd of his soul. Thus, the ignorance of one is instructed by the knowledge of another. The strong impart their vigor to the weak. The unwary learn caution from the wisdom of experience. The halting are rebuked. Those who run well are confirmed, and encouraged to persevere.

Besides the class meeting, Methodism has its "Love Feasts," which are also intended and calculated to cultivate spiritual fellowship. The Love Feast, though now peculiar to Methodism, is as ancient as the Christian Church. "It is certain," says COLEMAN, in his Ancient Christianity, "that the feast of charity was celebrated in the earliest period

of the Christian Church. See Acts, 2:46." It was celebrated at first in connection with the Lord's supper, and consisted of a social meal, accompanied with religious exercises and expressions of brotherly affection. As the primitive church lost its purity, the love feast lost its original significancy; abuses became associated with it, and it was finally abolished by the Council of Laodicea in the middle of the fourth century. Mr. Wesley, in imitation of the Moravians, adopted it with its present simple form, and strictly religious character, for the spiritual benefit of his societies. It remains, a cherished and delightful institution of Methodism, and is eminently fitted to promote Christian fellowship.

Thus, you see some of the spiritual advantages of Methodism. It cherishes with *direct* and habitual effort, the great elements of the Christian life; its doctrines are preëminently suited to feed the flame of that life; its peculiar institutions have the same tendency; it provides, as no other church does, for the

cultivation of Christian fellowship. In one word, the whole system is organized for the special purpose of developing deep, earnest, active, glowing piety. It offers no inducements to the spiritual sluggard, the formalist, the half-way Christian. It seeks the sincere lover of Christ, and offers itself to him as a helper to the attainment of the highest forms of the divine life. Are not these great advantages? Ought you to sacrifice them lightly? Are they not just what *you* desire in your holiest moments? Why then do you hesitate? Away with the suggestions of those who seek to proselyte you to other altars. Go, give yourself to your true spiritual mother, saying, in the simple language of the dutiful RUTH: "Thy people shall be my people; and thy God my God!"

CHAPTER IV.

OBJECTIONS TO METHODIST PECULIARITIES CONSIDERED.

N one of the European picture galleries, there is a fine portrait of JEAN PAUL RICHTER, surrounded by floating clouds, which, when examined closely, resolve themselves into beautiful angel faces. But so soft and shadowy are those angelic images, that to be discerned they must be beheld from a close standpoint, and studied with an attentive eye.

This picture embodies a truth in Methodism; for its peculiarities, if viewed at a distance and by a prejudiced mind, appear like impenetrable clouds. Their beauty and value are not fully apparent until one draws nigh to them, and examines them with an appreciative mind. Then they disclose them-

selves. Then they stand forth full of spiritual attraction and power. But inasmuch as many persons, who only view them from a distance and with envious feelings, have set themselves up as their critics and judges, you will not be surprised to learn that numerous objections have been brought against those very peculiarities which are at once the true ornaments of Methodism and the chief sources, under God, of its wonderful usefulness. You may meet with some of these self-constituted critics. Let me guard you against their misrepresentations. I will begin with their objections to the *class meeting*.

One writer (Rev. J. R. Graves, a Baptist,) says "the *conscience is hardened by it*." In support of this assertion, he argues that "confession of sin to God *without contrition*, hardens the conscience." He then infers that such confession to *men* "must harden the conscience in a greater degree." To illustrate his argument, this unscrupulous writer resorts to a sad slander. He says

"that a peculiar insensibility to moral honor and integrity of character" is "characteristic of the Methodist common mass."

This argument reposes on a gross fallacy. It assumes that the sole business of the class meeting is the confession of sin. This is not true. The class meeting is not a confessional, but a place for the *communication of religious experience.* It is the duty of the class leader to draw out such communication by inquiring of his members "how their souls prosper"—a question which covers the entire range of religious experience. It *may* lead to confession, or it may not. That depends very much on the spiritual health of the persons present. It generally leads to acknowledgments of the divine goodness, and descriptions of the various phases of the inner life which have characterized their recent experiences. Hence, the assumption that *confession* is the sole, or even the chief business of the class meeting, is false. And it is especially false to allege,

that when there is confession, it is unaccompanied by *contrition;* for the class meeting is the very last place to which an *impenitent* person would be likely to resort. Thus, the assumptions of this writer, being as false as they are uncharitable, his argument is invalid, and his objection falls to the ground. His charge of moral insensibility and defective integrity, as characteristic of Methodists, only reflects his own character, and proves him to be of that class of slanderers whom the poet describes in the following lines:

"They who stung were creeping things; but what
Than serpent's teeth inflict with deadliest throes?
The lion may be goaded by the gnat —
Who sucks the slumberer's blood? The eagle? — No, the bat."

It has been asserted by another writer, (Rev. Parsons Cooke, a Congregationalist,) that the class meeting is a "mitigated form of the Romish confessional." Your own intelligence will teach you that this is a lame and vulgar appeal to prejudice, because there is not the least analogy between the class

meeting and the confessional. You know that the Romish confessional is a *private* box, where the worshipper makes secret confession of *all* his sins to a *priest*, with a view to his *absolution*. It is a means by which the Romanist penitent performs the *sacrament* of penance. But a class meeting is a *meeting* of Christian people who *openly* converse with one of their number on the subject of religious experience, for the purpose of being assisted to "work out their own salvation." It needs no priest to carry it on. Its *leader* is a *layman*. It pretends to nothing *sacramental* in its character. It exacts no confessions of sin. It knows nothing of *priestly absolution*. Its type is not the Romish confessional, for it has no one feature which bears the smallest resemblance to that unscriptural institution. It is simply a meeting for the enjoyment and promotion of Christian fellowship, such as God's ancient people cherished, when, according to Malachi, "They that feared the Lord, spake

often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that fear the Lord, and that thought upon his name: ' and such as is required by the apostle James, where he says, " Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

Again, the same inconsiderate author affirms that the class meeting tends to "promote insincerity and a habit of hollow pretences," because the weekly relation of experience it requires is "a temptation to tread a beaten track of recital, in which actual experience does not run; or to rely somewhat upon invention for the materials of a story that will make a good appearance before the class."

This argument is both uncharitable and fallacious. Uncharitable, because it brings a charge of hypocrisy and falsehood against Methodists generally: fallacious, because it proceeds on the supposition that a sound

religious experience cannot furnish material for such weekly inquiries and relations as a class meeting implies, and therefore it must lead to false pretensions. But suppose the spiritual life is so active, so varied in its development, so surrounded by hindrances, and so subject to conflicts as to present innumerable phases and shades of experience, it must then be conceded that the class meeting is precisely fitted to meet its wants, because it furnishes stated opportunities to express its joys and griefs, and to obtain encouragement, instruction, and stimulus. Now this is the Methodistic view of the Christian life. And on this view, which I believe is the true one, class meetings stand firmly and securely built. Those who think the Christian life is dull and stagnant — a still half-putrid pool of subsided feeling — will readily believe that a Christian cannot have enough of "internal history" to furnish material for weekly communion, and that the class meeting cannot be sustained except by

falsehood and hypocrisy. But you, beloved reader, do not hold such low views of the Christian life. You know, too, that the class meeting has stood the test of more than a century, and that millions of pious souls have been wonderfully blessed by it. You will not therefore, be likely to be drawn away from Methodism by such objections.

You will also be likely to hear similar statements respecting *band meetings*. Mr. Graves has said of it "that the vilest questions to be found in Denn's Theology may be put to every member of a band meeting." To this a very short and sufficient answer is found in the fact that the *band meeting* is almost obsolete in American Methodism, and that the first instance of an improper question having been put by a band leader has yet to be adduced. In fact, the band meeting is designed only for persons who, having attained a high degree of spirituality, desire a closer spiritual fellowship than is provided for in the class meeting. But it was never

general or obligatory in Methodism; and, in all probability, never will be. It presupposes such a degree of sincerity, simplicity, integrity, and spirituality as, I fear, will never be universal in any sect, while poor human nature dwells in earthly tabernacles. Hence, they who seek to prejudice you against Methodism because of what they pretend to find objectionable in band meetings, only beat the air. They assail an institution which can hardly be said to exist, save in the letter of the discipline.

It may interest you to know that while some sectarian writers are assailing the class meeting, others, of more intelligence, candor, and piety, are recommending its introduction into their own ecclesiastical organisms. A recent article in the *Episcopal Recorder* recommends the institution of class or band meetings by the Protestant Episcopal Church. It says that from the "class meetings the great Methodist revival drew its strength, and had they been legitimated in the

Church of England, she would have remained in fact, as well as in name, NATIONAL." It mentions two or three instances in which meetings conducted like our class meetings were signally blessed — and concludes with the remark:— "And it is not too much to say, that by the adoption of such meetings in future, the church [Protestant Episcopal] would be taking the means, of all others the most efficient, for throwing off the spiritual sluggishness with which she is now oppressed."

Not long since, the pastor of a Congregationalist church in Massachusetts, in conversation with a Methodist preacher stationed in the same town, lamented that the converts of a recent revival in his church, did not manifest that vigor in their spiritual life which was desirable. He complained particularly of their backwardness in religious meetings. He then asked his Methodist brother; "How do you manage to secure so much activity as is manifest in your converts?"

"Sir," replied the Methodist preacher, "that results not so much from what I do, as from the influences of our system, especially of our class meeting."

"What is the nature of your class meeting?" inquired the other.

The preacher explained the manner and design of that meeting to him. After hearing his statement, the Congregationalist pastor looked up very earnestly, and with great emphasis remarked:

"Such a meeting must have a most beneficial influence both on old Christians and young converts. It is just what WE need!"

That pastor spoke honestly. He would doubtless have been glad, if the order and public sentiment of his denomination had permitted, to establish class meetings in his own church.

A kindred conviction of the value of this means of grace is also working its way into the minds of candid observers in England, as will appear by the following facts.

A committee of the English Convocation having recommended to the Episcopal Church the formation of religious fraternities within its bosom, for the benefit of converts, and a High Church writer, in advocating the measure, having ignored the existence of the Wesleyan class meeting, a scholarly critic in the *North British Review* calls attention to this feature of Wesleyanism. After quoting the disciplinary description of class and band meetings, this critic says: "Now we think that there are great doubts whether the effect upon the mind of this practice of confession, which prevails in this closest association, (*the band*) would, in most cases, be salutary or no; but it seems evident that it is the sort of confession recommended in St. James's Epistle, being, like it, mutual — directed, not to a priest, but to a righteous man, real or supposed — and with a view to obtaining the benefit of his prayers; and it supplies a want of the soul, which, although perhaps morbid, is a real and frequent one."

This writer then goes on to state what he "regards as the fault of the Wesleyan system," namely, "that the connection with a class is made an indispensable term of communion." "The whole thing," he adds, "should be optional; and then the system would be free from all objections, and might continue, *as it is at present, a great means of strengthening and holding the convert, and a great support and comfort to a large class of minds.*"

You will observe that the approval here given to class meetings is reluctant and qualified. The writer evidently shares in those prejudices which even candid and noble minds may innocently possess, against institutions with which, from the nature of the case, they cannot be practically acquainted. But this only renders the measure of approval which is given more valuable, for it shows that the writer applauds no more than his gravest and most mature judgment compels him to do. His praise is a concession made

to his prejudices, in obedience to the demands of his reason.

In the above quotations you will observe that this writer admits: 1. The scriptural character of the class meeting. 2. Its adaptation to supply a "real want" of the soul. 3. That it is a "great means of strengthening and holding the convert," a "great support and comfort to a large class of minds."

These admissions are important, coming as they do from a highly educated Presbyterian, through the columns of a British Review. They show that the best mind in the Christian church is beginning to recognize a fitness and an effectiveness in the ecclesiastical organism established by Mr. Wesley, which more shallow and bigoted minds have hitherto refused to see. They also indicate a tendency in other Christian bodies towards Methodist usages. They point to a period in which tardy justice will be done to Mr. Wesley's sagacity by the general adoption, with various modifications, of the leading

features of his system, by the evangelical churches of Christendom.

Such testimonies as these confirm what I have said in illustration of the value of the class meeting. They also show you that others, besides Methodists, concede its scriptural character, its necessity, and its fitness to supply a positive demand of the spiritual life. Be assured, then, that in entering the pale of Methodism, you will find in this institution such a help to the "communion of saints," and to growth in grace, as you can find in no other branch of the Christian Church. No other church provides in its organism for the culture of Christian fellowship.

It is related of a certain Spaniard that he was accustomed to put on spectacles when he ate cherries, that they might appear large and tempting to his eye. I have no doubt you will find persons among those seeking to proselyte you, who are wont to put on spectacles when they examine the peculiari-

ties of our church. Such spectacled critics will point you to numerous imaginary evils. Perhaps they will try to convince you that Methodist prayer meetings are marked by practices which are contrary to the true order of the church of God. They may tell you, for instance, as the Rev. Parsons Cooke has done, that our practice of relating experiences tends "to promote insincerity and a habit of hollow pretences." In support of this charge they may refer to this redoubtable gentleman, who gravely relates that he once heard "fifteen professed converts giving their experience," who "repeated always the ideas and most often the words of the first." This convinced the Reverend critic, that their "experience was nothing more than the recital of a lesson from memory." Your spectacled informants may then add, that these converts were schooled into this hypocrisy by our system, and that consequently you had better forsake it as quickly as possible.

But *you* already know enough of Methodism

to perceive the utter falsity of this charge, which, by the way, carries its own refutation on its face. Just look at it.

1. It is not customary in public Methodist prayer meetings for converts to relate their experience at length. They merely make a general confession of their newly found faith in Christ. 2. The fifteen converts evidently did not do it, for the time usually occupied in a public meeting, would be insufficient for fifteen persons to give their experience, "*in all its forms and minuteness.*"

Now, if they were not relating the details of their experience, but only making a general confession of their faith, what becomes of this argument? It surely will not be affirmed to be a thing "incredible," that fifteen persons should have had a genuine religious experience so *substantially* identical as to find true expression in ideas and verbiage very nearly similar? Is not the experience of every Christian in *substance* the same? Does not the *difference* in Christian

experience, lie chiefly in mode, circumstance, and detail, rather than in substance? If not, why do the writings of David and Paul furnish the best possible language by which to express the experience of modern believers? Why then is the sameness of verbiage and ideas employed by fifteen converts to express a general confession of an experience which, in order to be genuine, must be substantially identical, tortured into an argument against their sincerity? Is there not a corresponding sameness in the general profession, which Calvinistic converts make in their inquiry and conference meetings? Do they not all speak of "indulging a hope," of trusting in "God's covenanted mercies," and of *hoping* in the "sovereign grace of God," and kindred "stereotyped" phrases? What then becomes of this argument? It falls to the ground, a glaring sophism, which *you* will shake off as easily as Paul shook the viper from his hand on the island of Melita.

The Methodist *prayer meeting* is objected

to by some, because of its "noise," its altar for penitents, its seeming confusion, and, in seasons of revival, and at camp meetings, its scenes of earnest excitement. These things have been wickedly ridiculed by Mr. Cooke, who, in the true spirit of infidelity, calls them a "religious comedy," "comic operations," &c., which are encouraged by our ministry, he says, not because of their intrinsic rightfulness, but because they "promote Methodism."

I very much mistake the temper of your piety, dear convert, if this objection has the weight of a feather in your estimation. *You* are an *earnest* Christian. *You* believe in an *earnest* Christianity. *You* could not endure to see men laboring to save immortal souls from impending death, with the cool gravity of a Turk sipping coffee. You believe that coldness and formality are never more out of place than at a prayer meeting. You will, therefore, treat this objection with the contempt it justly merits. Provided the

earnestness of Methodism does not degenerate into extravagance and fanaticism, it will be to you its highest commendation, that at its altars the penitent is not forbidden to exhibit the intense emotions of his awakened soul; no, not if they lead him to come "trembling," and "falling down," like the Philippian jailor, and crying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Nor, will you be kept from Methodism because its ministers and members are quick to sympathize with such intensity of feeling, ready to pour out their souls in strong desire for seekers, and to lift up their voices in fervent praise when God pronounces them forgiven.

Now what is there beyond this in the *usual* manifestations of Methodist prayer meetings? Occasionally, and in some places, it is true, the tides of feeling may overflow the banks of rigid propriety. But are such exceptional breaches of the ordinary proprieties of life so unbecoming as to merit the title of "comic operations?" I have read

that a Czar of Russia once saw a peasant struggling for life in the waters of a river. The sight appealed to his humanity. The Czar was forgotten in the man. He tore off his coat, leaped into the river, brought the half dead peasant to the shore, and stood dripping and disordered among his astonished attendants. Doubtless his aspect was very "comic," very unsatisfactory in the eyes of brainless etiquette. But who with a *man's* heart in his bosom, could ridicule him? So too, there may be in a Methodist prayer meeting, such struggling for the "life" of sinking souls as gives rise to "strong cries and tears," to demonstrations which are uncourtly, and contrary to the laws of a finical etiquette; but who with the soul of a Christian, can find it in his heart to ridicule such things? I would not, to be sure, *encourage* them. They are not sought for or cherished in the Methodist church, generally. But I cannot understand how any man, whose heart has learned to agonize for the "birth of

souls," can *mock* at them when they do occur. I shrink from such a man, as I would from a French dancing master, who should stand beside the stake of a dying martyr and criticise him because his postures were not altogether *secundum artem*. I have little doubt that, if such as he had witnessed the excitement which followed the discourse of Peter on the day of Pentecost, they would have pronounced it a "religious comedy." But I need not dwell on this point. *You*, beloved reader, are too earnest a Christian to be moved from Methodism by assaults upon its activity, intensity, and ardent sympathy for human salvation.

Another usage of Methodism, which is often bitterly assailed by its enemies, is the Christian liberty it allows to *women*. Believing, with an apostle, that in "Christ Jesus" there is neither "male nor female," it does not reduce woman to a cypher, or restrict her power to do good, by depriving her of the privilege of offering prayer, or of declaring

the goodness of God to her soul, in class and prayer meetings. Woman's equality in the rights, privileges, and blessings of the gospel is practically declared in Methodism, by her admission to these privileges. If the reader is a woman, this fact must commend Methodism to her esteem. She may not wish to use these opportunities herself, for she may possess so sensitive a nature as to shrink from public observation. Still, she can but feel the honor done to her sex by a usage which so distinctly recognizes its equality. She can but acknowledge that Methodism has an especial claim on woman's gratitude for this most excellent custom.

But is this usage scriptural? Many Calvinists affirm that it is not. They heap unstinted censures on the Methodist church for allowing it; claiming that it is forbidden by the apostle, in these words: "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak." 1 Cor. 14 : 34.

If this were the only text in which women's privileges were referred to by the apostle, it might settle the question. But fortunately the mind of the Spirit is elsewhere expressed, and that too, in favor of the usage of Methodism, and the dignity of women. In 1 Cor. 11 : 5, the apostle recognizes the right of women to speak and pray in the church, by prescribing the manner in which those duties are to be performed. "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head." Again, in verse 13; "Is it comely that a woman pray unto God with her head uncovered?" That you may see the force of these texts, I will quote Dr. Adam Clarke's comment upon verse 5th.

"Whatever may be the meaning of praying and prophesying in respect to the man, they have precisely the same meaning in respect to the woman. So that some women, at least, as well as some men, might speak to others to edification and exhortation, and

comfort. And this kind of prophesying or teaching, was predicted by Joel, 2 : 28, and referred to by Peter, Acts 2 : 17. And had there not been such gifts bestowed on women, the prophecy could not have had its fulfilment. The only difference marked by the apostle was, the man had his head uncovered, because he was the representative of Christ, the woman had hers covered. because she was placed, by the order of God, in a state of subjection to the man; and because it was a custom, both among the Greeks and Romans, and among the Jews an express law, that no woman should be seen abroad without a veil."

This interpretation accords with the practice of the primitive church, as shown in various portions of the New Testament. Did not a woman make the first proclamation of the resurrection of Christ to the apostolic college? Did not PRISCILLA instruct APOLLOS in the meaning of the Scriptures? Did not Paul greet her as his

"helper in Christ Jesus?" Did he not "thank her" for her services, and declare that "all the churches of the Gentiles thanked" her also? (See Romans 16:4). Did he not also send salutations to TRYPHENA, TRYPHOSA, and the "beloved PERSIS?" Of the first two ladies he says, they "labor in the Lord:" of Persis, that she "labored much in the Lord." What this labor was, I will permit Dr. Clarke to state. In his note on Romans 16:12, he says of Tryphena and Tryphosa:—

"Two holy women, who, it seems, were assistants to the apostle in his work; probably by exhorting, visiting the sick, &c. Persis was another woman, who, it seems, excelled the preceding; for, of her it is said, she labored much in the Lord. We learn from this, that Christian *women*, as well as men, labored in the ministry of the word. In those times of simplicity, all persons, whether men or women, who had received the knowledge of the truth, believed it to be

their duty to propagate it to the uttermost of their power. Many have spent much useless labor in endeavoring to prove that these women did not preach. That there were some *prophetesses*, as well as prophets in the Christian church, we learn; and that a *woman* might *pray* or *prophecy*, provided she had her *head covered* we know; and that whoever prophesied spoke unto others to edification, exhortation, and comfort, St. Paul declares, 1 Cor. 14: 3. And that no preacher can do more, every person must acknowledge; because to edify, exhort, and comfort, are the prime ends of the gospel ministry. If *women* thus prophesied, then women preached. There is, however, much more than this implied in the Christian ministry, of which men only, and men called of God, are capable."

But how can these facts and interpretations be harmonized with the command to "keep silence," quoted above? There is but one way to do this. The prohibition must be under-

stood to apply to speaking under particular circumstances, not to speaking and praying in general. This is Dr. Clarke's view. He says of the words "Let your women keep silence in the churches:" * * * "It is evident from the context, that the apostle refers here to *asking questions*, and what we call *dictating* in the assemblies. It was permitted to any man to ask questions, to object, to altercate, attempt to refute, &c., in the synagogue; but this liberty was not allowed to any woman. St. Paul confirms this, in reference also to the Christian church. He orders them to keep silence, and if they wish to learn any thing, let them inquire of their husbands at home, because it was perfectly indecorous for women to be contending with men in public assemblies on points of doctrine, cases of conscience, &c. But this, by no means, intimated that when a woman received any particular influence from God, to enable her to teach, that she was not to obey that influence; on the contrary, she was to

obey it, and the apostle lays down directions in chap. 11, for regulating her *personal appearance* when thus employed," &c.

Accept this explanation and all is clear. There is then no contradiction between the precepts themselves, nor between the precepts and the practice of the apostle. Deny it, and the precepts oppose each other: the apostle is guilty of the inconsistency of tolerating and praising a practice in one place, which he condemns in another. I know *you* will not accept this latter conclusion. You have then but one alternative. You must believe that the Methodist usage of permitting women to speak and pray is sanctioned by the practice of the Apostolic church, and by the word of God.

Such are the chief objections urged against our leading peculiarities. You see how readily they dissolve when touched by the Ithuriel spear of examination. It is so with all the objections which are coined so plentifully in the mint of our enemies. The

fact is, they do not understand Methodism, and you have but to compare their assertions with the real facts, to see them melt into air.

A laughable instance of this ignorance, even in regard to the historical facts of the church, occurs in the writings of Mr. Cooke. Speaking of JESSE LEE, he says: "there is a tradition that when he came to Lynn on a visit, many years after his mission here, and saw the present meeting house of the first Methodist Church, with its steeple and bell, and all the common conveniences of meeting houses, he was indignant at the mark of degeneracy in his church, and even refused to preach in the new house."

Had the writer of this scrap of petty gossip turned to Jesse Lee's life, he would have learned that the good man *never saw* the present meeting house of the first Methodist Church in Lynn. His *last* visit to that town was made in 1808—*five years before the said house was dedicated!*

How competent to judge correctly of Methodism such critics are, you can readily determine. If you will bring all the statements you hear against it, by those who seek to proselyte you from its communion, to the test of facts, you will see them vanish like this tradition. Bring Methodism to the light, and it will shine brighter and brighter. And this is the secret cause of the hostility which frowns upon it from so many quarters. It contains so much that is good, so many elements of real power, that the breasts of strong sectarians are filled with envy. For this cause, could its enemies triumph, it might be said of it, as was once said of a shining man:

> "Was he not rich in independent worth?
> And great in native goodness? that undid him!
> There, there he fell! If he had been less great,
> He had been safe."

CHAPTER V.

DOCTRINES PECULIAR TO METHODISM.

"OPINION is mistress of the world," says the Italian proverb. And is it not so? Is there not a close relationship between the actions and opinions of men? Does not doctrine mould character and give color to action? Find a nation with a false theology, and do you not also find it corrupt in affection and wicked in practice? Did not the cruel, unchaste, bloodthirsty deities of Greece and Rome beget cruelty, lust, and strife in their worshippers? Has any race of men ever attained to rectitude of character through faith in debasing falsehoods? Has any sect ever attained to a Christian standard of experience and morals while denying truths fundamental to Christianity? Never! How,

then, can you reasonably hope to grow up to the maturity of a sound and healthy Christian character without attaining correct views of the doctrines of Holy Writ? You cannot. The thistle will not bring forth figs. Beauty will not spring from deformity. Neither will error produce heavenly affections, nor unscriptural doctrines eliminate a holy life.

If, therefore, beloved convert, you would attain to a comfortable experience, a right state of heart, and a pure life, you must cherish sound doctrines — you must study to conform your creed to the teachings of the divine word. You must place yourself in communion with that church whose pulpit enounces the purest forms of truth, whose creed is nearest to the Bible.

If you are guided by these principles, I think you will not hesitate to enter the pale of Methodism; for in its creed you will find doctrines which commend themselves to your enlightened reason, which harmonize

with the word of God, and which are eminently adapted to support and develop a vigorous religious experience.

I cannot in this little volume enter into a thorough exposition and defence of the doctrines of Methodism. All I can do, is to throw out such hints and suggestions as may strengthen your confidence in those doctrines which I presume you to have already embraced; and to fortify your mind against such objections as your proselyting friends may whisper in your ears.

I wish you to note first, that the *fundamental* doctrines of Methodism are in strict harmony with the faith of the evangelical church of all ages and in all countries. Methodists hold, in common with Calvinists, the doctrines of human depravity, the deity of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith only, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the future punishment of unbelievers, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and their sufficiency for salvation. Hence, you perceive,

that the *evangelical* character of Methodism cannot be truthfully denied, because it teaches those great cardinal truths which have ever distinguished evangelical from non-evangelical bodies.

The leading doctrines maintained by the Methodists you will find stated, in general terms, in the twenty-five articles of religion contained in the "Discipline." These articles, with the exception of the *twenty-third*, were abridged from the "Thirty-nine Articles" of the Church of England,* by Mr. Wesley. They were first printed in what was called the "Sunday Service;" but, in 1790, they were incorporated into the body of the discipline. That you may know how they are interpreted by our church, I will quote the Rev. Richard Watson's statement of those

* These articles were originally *forty-two* in number. They were first framed by Archbishop Cranmer and Bishop Ridley, in 1551. After being approved by the Convocation, they were published in English and Latin, in 1553. In 1562, they were revised and reduced to thirty-nine, and approved by the Convocation.

points in them for the defence of which Methodism has always been distinguished.

"Methodists maintain the total fall of man in Adam, and his utter inability to recover himself, or to take one step towards his recovery, 'without the grace of God preventing him, that he may have a good will, and working with him when he has that good will.' They assert that 'Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.' This grace they call free, as extending itself freely to all. They say that 'Christ is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe;' and that, consequently, they are authorized to offer salvation to all, and to 'preach the gospel to every creature.' They hold justification by faith. 'Justification,' says Mr. Wesley, 'sometimes means our acquittal at the last day, Matt. 12:37; but this is altogether out of the present question; for that justification, whereof our Articles and Homilies speak, signifies present forgiveness, pardon of sins, and consequently acceptance with God.

who therein declares his righteousness, or justice, and mercy, by or for the remission of sins that are past, Rom. 3:25, saying, I will be merciful to thy unrighteousness, and thy iniquities I will remember no more. I believe the condition of this is faith. Rom. 4:5, &c.; I mean, not only that without faith we cannot be justified, but also that as soon as any one has true faith, in that moment he is justified. Faith in general, is a divine supernatural evidence, or conviction, of things not seen, not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence, or conviction, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, but a full reliance on the merits of his death, a sure confidence that Christ died for my sins; that he loved me, and gave himself for me; and the moment a penitent sinner believes this, God pardons and absolves him.'

"This faith, Mr. Wesley affirms, 'is the gift of God. No man is able to work it in

himself. It is a work of Omnipotence. It requires no less power thus to quicken a dead soul, than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a new creation; and none can create a soul anew but He, who first created the heavens and the earth. It is the free gift of God, which he bestows not on those who are worthy of his favor, not on such as are previously holy, and so fit to be crowned with all the blessings of his goodness; but on the ungodly and unholy, on those who, till that hour, were fit only for everlasting destruction; those in whom is no good thing, and whose only plea was, God be merciful to me a sinner! No merit, no goodness in man, precedes the forgiving love of God. His pardoning mercy supposes nothing in us but a sense of mere sin and misery; and to all who see and feel and own their wants, and utter inability to remove them, God freely gives faith, for the sake of Him in whom he is always well pleased. Good works follow this faith, Luke

6:43, but cannot go before it; much less can sanctification, which implies a continued course of good works springing from holiness of heart.'

"As to repentance, he insisted that it is conviction of sin, and that repentance and works meet for repentance, go before justifying faith; but he held, with the Church of England, that all works, before justification, had, 'the nature of sin;' and that, as they had no root in the love of God, which can only arise from a persuasion of his being reconciled to us, they could not constitute a moral worthiness preparatory to pardon. That true repentance springs from the grace of God, is most certain; but, whatever fruits it may bring forth, it changes not man's relation to God. He is a sinner, and is justified as such; 'for it is not a saint, but a sinner, that is forgiven, and under the notion of a sinner.' God justifieth the ungodly, not the godly. Repentance, according to his statement, is necessary to true faith; but

faith alone is the direct and immediate instrument of pardon. They hold also the direct internal testimony of the Holy Spirit to the believer's adoption.

"They maintain also, that by virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ, and the operations of the Holy Spirit, it is their privilege to arrive at that maturity in grace, and participation of divine nature, which excludes sin from the heart, and fills it with perfect love to God and man. This they denominate Christian perfection. On this doctrine Mr. Wesley observes, 'Christian perfection does not imply an exemption from ignorance or mistake, infirmities or temptations; but it implies the being so crucified with Christ, as to be able to testify, I live not, but Christ liveth in me, Gal. 2:23, and hath purified their hearts by faith, Acts. 15:9.' Again: 'To explain myself a little farther on this head: 1. Not only sin, properly so called, that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law; but sin, improperly so called, that is, an involuntary

transgression of a divine law, known or unknown, needs the atoning blood. 2. I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which, I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. 3. Therefore, sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should contradict myself. 4. I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. 5. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please; I do not, for the reasons above mentioned.'"

With respect to the doctrine of "Final Perseverance," the Methodists hold "that God gives to the truly faithful, who are regenerated by his grace, the means of preserving themselves in this state; yet the regenerate may lose true justifying faith, forfeit their state of grace, and die in their sins." See Ezek. 18:24, and 33:18. John 15:6. Heb. 6:4–6.

These doctrines, though taught with peculiar emphasis and distinctness by Mr. Wesley and his followers, did not originate with him. As I have already observed, they are as ancient as Christianity. The opposite tenets, now known as Calvinism, were unknown to the primitive church. All the Fathers, down to the time of AUGUSTINE, an African bishop, who flourished in the latter part of the fourth century, taught the truths which now distinguish the Methodists from their Calvinistic neighbors. For Calvin himself admits, that none of the Fathers, either Greek or Latin, before Augustine, give countenance to his peculiar theology. And even Augustine, in his later works, teaches opinions which are more in harmony with the theory of universal redemption and its consequents, than with the scheme of predestination and limited atonement, which he had invented at an earlier period of his career.

Now if Calvinism is taught in the Bible, how came it to pass that the contemporaries

and immediate successors of the apostles, knew nothing about it? Why is it that its first appearance in the written theology of the primitive church, is in the writings of Augustine the African? Does it appear probable that such important doctrines as unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the necessary final perseverance of the elect, would have been forgotten or overlooked, and that their contraries would be universally received, for over three hundred years after Christ, if his apostles had taught them to the church? Your common sense will answer in the negative. Your reason will teach you that this silence of all the Fathers before Augustine, is strong presumptive proof that the church knew nothing of those unscriptural theories, until the philosophic bishop of Hippo evolved them in his controversies with PELAGIUS the heretic. While the opposite fact, that they all taught an unlimited atonement, conditional election, &c., affords equally strong presumption, that

these latter doctrines were received by them from the apostles. These things being so, it is clear that Methodist doctrines are as ancient as Christianity — that, in fact, they include all that is contained in Christianity, and are *the* doctrines of Holy Writ.

The doctrines now taught by Methodism were also taught in Germany during the palmiest days of the Reformation. MELANCTHON held them. LUTHER toward the end of his life endorsed them. The greatest lights of the Reformation in England also maintained them; while in Holland, they were nobly upheld by ARMINIUS. Mr. Wesley revived them, and they are now received by the majority of living Christians.

You are aware that the doctrines of Methodism are often called Arminianism. They are so named after JAMES ARMINIUS of whose history I will give you a brief sketch.

D'AUBIGNE has eloquently and truly remarked that "Men, like stars, appear on the horizon at the command of God!" James

Arminius was one of these stars. By his light, God saved his church from the gloom and darkness of the stern and unscriptural theology of John Calvin.

Like most great men, James Arminius sprung from the people, and not from the titled ranks of society. His father was a mechanic, ingenious and respectable, but comparatively poor. James was born in 1560, at Oudewater, in Holland, and was bereft of his father while yet an infant. A learned clergyman kindly received him under his roof, and superintended his education. When fifteen years of age, Arminius was deprived of this friend by death. But his extraordinary talents attracted the attention of one of his townsmen, a learned man, who took him to Marpurg, in Hessia, and caused him to enter the university. While here, our young theologian, now converted to God, was deprived of his mother, brother, and sister. They perished in the overthrow of Oudewater by the Spanish army.

In 1575, Arminius removed to Leyden and entered the university just established at that place by the Prince of Orange. Here he continued six years; when the municipal authorities of Amsterdam assumed the expense of his future academic studies, on condition that his ministry should be exercised in that city, and that he should dispose of his services only as they might approve.

We find him next at Geneva, for a brief period; then, at Basle for a year; and, then, for three years again at Geneva. His academic studies concluded, he made a short tour in Italy; tarried awhile at Padua; and then, returning to Holland, he was ordained pastor of the Dutch Church in Amsterdam, in 1588. In 1603, he was elected professor of Divinity in the university of Leyden; and on the nineteenth of October, 1609, he died a calm and peaceful death, at the age of forty-nine years.

Arminius was held in very high estimation, for his attainments and genius, while he was

a student; and his success and popularity as a minister and professor fully justified the high opinion formed of him by his tutors and fellow students. But the latter years of his life were embittered by the hostility of his Calvinistic adversaries, whose malevolence, it was thought, contributed to render the disease of which he died, fatal.

His controversy with the Calvinists was brought about by a request of the ecclesiastical senate of Amsterdam, that he would refute the alleged errors of a pious minister, named COORNHERT, who had assailed the opinions of Calvin on Predestination, &c., some nine years previously. Applying his mind to the fulfilment of this request, he was led to such an examination of Calvin's dogmas as resulted in a conviction that they were unscriptural, and in the adoption of those opinions to which his name has since been attached. The violent assaults of the Calvinistic party on himself, and on his opinions, led to the writings which constitute his "works."

After the death of Arminius, his followers were cruelly persecuted by the Calvinists. A synod was called at Dort, in 1618, by which the Arminians were pronounced heretics, were excommunicated, driven from their churches, imprisoned, fined, and banished. Their name became a by-word and reproach among their enemies. And it has been a favorite practice among Calvinists, from that time until now, to call almost every form of doctrinal error Arminianism. "If a man hold that good works are necessary to justification; if he reject the doctrine of original sin; if he deny that divine grace is necessary for the whole work of sanctification; it is concluded that he is an Arminian. But the truth is, that a man of such sentiments is a disciple of the Pelagian school. To such sentiments pure Arminianism is as diametrically opposed as Calvinism itself."

You may be told, nevertheless, that the doctrines of Methodism are identical with those heresies, misnamed Arminianism, which

once prevailed among the New England Congregationalists, and which "rocked the cradle of Unitarianism in a hundred churches."

But the assertion is false. The heresy which pervaded those churches was not true Arminianism. It was *Pelagianism*. It denied human depravity; it taught the doctrine of salvation by works. You will be satisfied on this point if you will carefully read the following extracts from Mr. Tracy's History of the Great Awakening. That writer says:—

"Rev. Joseph Peck had been too much enlightened by conviction of sin to embrace Arminian principles at large; but still secretly imagined that there was *something in men to begin with, and which gospel grace came to make perfect.* He preached and labored with his own heart accordingly, but could not get to such a pitch as to think himself ripe for grace, or with any confidence lay claim to it, because he found his own works not good enough to build any such claim upon; so it was for several

years, till it pleased God * *. to show him a way of justification by faith, without the deeds of the law."

Describing the so-called Arminian ministers of Connecticut, Mr. Tracy says:—

"They led their hearers to believe, *that by a certain round of duties, performed while still impenitent, they might insure their regeneration;* * * that the proper course for a sinner to take was to go steadily about the duties which God has appointed for impenitent sinners to *perform before conversion*, and leave the event with God." "This," says Mr. T., * * "was practically Arminianism. If any one preached Calvinism thoroughly, to the very end of his sermon, maintaining that God has made no promise to such as industriously perform certain duties while impenitent, that nothing done during impenitence *counts at all toward the justification of the doer*, that deferring repentance and faith, and *doing something else first*, is flat rebellion against God, all

such preaching was condemned as Antinomian;" p. 309, *History of the Great Awakening.*

Edwards gives a similar view of the alleged Arminianism of those times in the following sentence:—

"According to Arminian principles *men have a good and honest heart,* the very thing that is the grand requisite in order to God's acceptance, * * *before they have the proper condition of salvation.*" Edwards' Works, p. 581, Vol. 2.

I will now quote a sentence or two from Watson's Dictionary, descriptive of the salient points in the system of Pelagius, premising that PELAGIUS was a British monk who lived in the early part of the fifth century. Visiting Rome, with his friend CELESTIUS, he opposed the "received notions concerning original sin, and the necessity of the divine grace." Watson says he is represented as teaching "that mankind *derived no*

injury from the sin of Adam; that we are now as capable of obedience to the will of God as he was, * * that men are born without vice as well as without virtue. *That it is possible for men, provided they fully employ the powers and faculties with which they are endued, to live without sin;*" and Watson adds, "though he did not deny that external grace, or the doctrines and motives of the gospel, are necessary, yet he is said to have rejected the *necessity of internal grace, or the aids of the Divine Spirit.*"

By comparing the italicised sentences in the above quotations, you will perceive that what Edwards and Tracy call Arminianism is strictly identical with the peculiar views of Pelagius. Both systems denied the doctrines of original sin, and the absolute dependence of man for regeneration on the grace of God; both taught the doctrine of salvation by works, in opposition to the scriptural and Methodistical theory of salva-

tion by grace, and justification by faith alone.*

With these facts and statements before you, I think you will be convinced that those who charge Methodism with a likeness to the heresy which desolated the churches of the last century, are "false accusers," and consequently unworthy of your confidence in this matter.

For a further view of the points of difference between Pelagianism and Arminianism, see Appendix No. 1.

There is yet another misrepresentation of

* This just distinction between a true and false Arminianism is recognized and stated by the Rev. Mr. Clarke, Secretary of the Home Missionary Society, in his "Historical Discourse," in the following note: "The term (Arminianism) is used here and throughout this discourse to denote the doctrine of DO AND LIVE, or salvation by works, a system which dispenses with the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit's agency, and is more properly named *Pelagianism*. In this sense of the word, it can hardly be said that Arminius was himself an Arminian. But as the word was uniformly employed by our fathers of the last century to indicate these Pelagian views, which were coming into the churches, it is thought best to retain it in tracing its growth."

Arminianism which your proselyting friends may use to excite your prejudices. They may tell you, in the words of a recent writer, that *Romanism* has its "basis in the Arminian doctrines." "Romanism," they may say, "like Methodism, denies the doctrines of election, of efficacious grace, of perseverance; it inculcates the existence of sinless perfection, and even more, of works of supererogation; that is, becoming more than perfect. And *with these Methodist doctrines* Romanism has wrought with fearful power."

But you must not permit such a statement as this to influence your action, because it is as groundless as the one I have just laid bare. By looking at the eleventh article of religion in the discipline (p. 19) you will see that it denounces works of supererogation thus: "Voluntary works, besides, over and above God's commandment, which are called *works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety.*"

With respect to "sinless perfection," Mr.

Wesley says it is a "phrase I never use." It has never been taught by the Methodist Church.

Nor is it true that Romanists are generally Arminians. They have always had no inconsiderable number of believers in the dogmas of Augustine in their communion. Says Mosheim, (vol. 3, p. 106,) "The Dominicans, (the most powerful of the monkish orders) the Augustinians, the followers of Jansenius, and likewise many others, deny that divine grace can possibly be resisted, * * * deny that there are any conditions annexed to the eternal decrees of God respecting the salvation of *all* men, and other kindred doctrines;" in other words, these orders and sectaries of the Romish Church teach the views of high Calvinists. And when Luther and his coadjutors taught the opinions which entered into the scheme of Arminius, the Romish Church, says Mosheim, approved "*Augustine's* sentiments," which are substantially identical with Calvin's. The truth is,

the views which distinguish both the Arminian and Calvinistic schools have always been largely represented in the Papal Church, and so long as both parties were otherwise faithful to her claims, she has tolerated both. It cannot be said of Romanism that it has been or is Calvinist or Arminian. It has been and still is, both, and neither scheme of theology is responsible for its errors.

Thus, you see, this attempt to identify Methodist doctrines with Romanism is futile. It stands on assumptions which are historically false, and cannot therefore command your credence.

Hold fast then, beloved convert, to Methodist doctrines. They are scriptural, reasonable, full of comfort, full of power to meet the demands of your spiritual nature. Under their inspiration the primitive church spread itself over the world. They begat holy courage in the confessor, and heavenly heroism in the martyr, during the heroic age of the church. They gave life to the best period

and the best advocates of the Reformation. Their proclamation by Wesley and his co-adjutors woke the slumbering church of the last century to new life; and gave birth to a spiritual quickening which saved Christianity from the death which threatened it, and which is felt to this day all over the Christian world. Supported by them, millions of holy souls have successfully solved the awful problem of their probation, have triumphed in their conflict with death, and have departed to reign with the Great Teacher by whom they were revealed. Hold them fast, therefore, and they will guide you to their author's throne.

On the contrary, if you embrace Calvinism, you will be involved in a labyrinth of perplexities. Ultra Calvinism (see Appendix, No. 2) with its horrible decrees of unconditional election of some to life, and its fore-ordination of others to death, with its infant damnation and passive regeneration, will disgust your reason, wound your sense of justice,

pain your sensibilities, and embarrass your experience. Moderate Calvinism, with its fallacious distinction between gracious and natural ability, will equally perplex you, if you are honest and inquiring; because you will always feel conscious that you are obliged to dogmatically reject its logical consequences, or be compelled to accept the most repulsive features of ultra Calvinism. Added to this mental embarrassment, will be the fact that the Calvinist theology will chill your experience. It will hold you in agonizing doubt as to your being one of the elect; or else it will tempt you to indifference, on the ground that whether you struggle earnestly for life, or glide indolently down the stream, the result, being absolutely foreordained and unalterably fixed, will be the same. Thus distracted or tempted by your theology, your experience, in all probability, will be sad, painful, unsatisfactory. The childlike trust, the unwavering confidence, the rapturous love, the beaming hope, the aspir

ing energy, the tireless effort, which spring from the doctrines of Methodism, will be almost lost to you. But I need not urge this point with *you*. You see that the Scriptures, common sense, and the demands of your spiritual life, all point you to Methodism; and you will, I feel persuaded, conscientiously follow their guidance, despite of all influence from without.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOUNDER OF METHODISM.

THE Oriental world produces a singular tree, which, in several of its characteristics, not unaptly illustrates the rise and growth of Methodism. This tree, it is called the BANIAN TREE, has a woody stem, branching to a great height and vast extent. Every branch throws out new roots, which descend to the earth, strike in, and increase to large trunks, from which new branches grow, and new roots are again produced. This progression continues until the original tree literally becomes a forest. In like manner, Methodism, beginning with a single society, threw out branches with depending roots. These roots, striking into new portions of the community, grew

into new churches. These again were reproductive. This progress has steadfastly continued. It continues now. Little more than a century has elapsed since it threw up its first shoot; yet, rooted in every quarter of the globe, it already bids fair to cover the earth with its branches, and to fill the world with its influences.

The creation of this great spiritual fellowship, numbering in all its branches over *two millions* of communicants, in so short a period, is a phenomenon unparalleled by any fact in the history of the Christian church since the apostolic era. Who can study the simplicity of its beginnings, the rapidity of its growth, the stability of its institutions, the amazing power of its influence on Christianity in general, its present vitality and activity, its commanding position, and its prospective greatness, without exclaiming in a spirit of astonishment and gratitude, "What hath God wrought?"

I have already pointed out numerous

spiritual advantages, which you may personally enjoy in the fellowship of Methodism. I now wish you to take a broader view — to stand like a traveller upon a mountain's peak, and survey the system from its beginning until now,— to study the character of its founders, mark the hand of God in its surprising development, examine its vast spiritual results, and convince yourself that, of all existing churches, it is the most highly honored of God, the most beneficial to the world. Let us glance first at the man by whose piety, labors, and genius it arose.

Methodism, considered as an organization, is of recent date. It sprang, as you know, from the pious labors of the two Wesleys and their devoted compeers. John Wesley, however, must be regarded as its true founder. But for him, though there might have been a powerful revival of spiritual religion, there would, in all probability, have been no Methodist church. He alone possessed the faculty of organization and government, which was

necessary to gather up, combine, and construct the spiritual results of the revival into a church. He led the great Methodistic movement, and stamped the image of his own mind upon it. He devised the simple institutions, organized the ministry, and governed the societies, which, in their development, grew into the various Methodist churches now existing in different parts of the world. It will, therefore, be proper to give you a brief sketch of his life and character.

JOHN WESLEY was born in the rectory of Epworth, England, June 17, 1703. His father, SAMUEL WESLEY, the rector, was a scholarly, pious, sternly energetic, independent man,— a true man and a faithful minister. His mother, SUSANNA WESLEY, was a woman of extraordinary intelligence and force of mind, of correct judgment, vivid apprehension of truth, and ardent piety. Under their training, Wesley passed his boyhood up to his eleventh year, his mother paying peculiar

attention to the formation of his character, because of his singular escape, when a little boy, from his chamber, when the rectory was destroyed by fire. He was educated, first at the Charter House, then at Oxford. He was ordained a deacon in the church of England, in 1725. The next year he was elected a "Fellow" of Lincoln college, and in 1728 was ordained a priest.

For a few months, he acted as curate for his father at Epworth. But being strongly urged to become the tutor of several young gentlemen at Oxford, he returned thither in 1729. His first act, almost, was to form a society composed of himself, his brother Charles, Mr. Morgan, and Mr. Kirkham. The object of this society was "to promote each other's intellectual, moral, and spiritual improvement." To accomplish this, they spent "three or four evenings a week together, reading the Greek Testament, with the Greek and Latin classics. On Sunday evenings, they read divinity." They also

adopted various rules for the better government of their lives, and the improvement of their time. They visited the sick, relieved the poor, circulated the scriptures, fasted much, prayed much, denied themselves of every sinful amusement and indulgence, attended the means of grace very strictly, and sought to reach the highest possible spiritual attainments.

This strict course of life, so unusual among the inmates of the college, soon brought down an avalanche of persecution upon their heads. Scorn, rebuke, insult, fell upon them abundantly, from all quarters. Their fidelity to their sense of duty cost them the good opinion of most of their college companions, who stigmatized them with such titles as the "Holy Club," the "Godly Club," the "Enthusiasts," the "Reforming Club," "Methodists," "Supererogation men," and so on. But, like their master, they stood undaunted in the presence of persecution. Its only effect was to stimulate their zeal,

quicken their devotion, and increase their numbers.

You will observe, my dear reader, that although these young men were termed Methodists at Oxford, by way of ridicule, yet Methodism proper was not yet organized. That band of young men did not constitute a "Methodist society." Its members were only styled Methodists by way of reproach, just as spiritually minded men had been called "Methodists" in a sermon preached at Lambeth a hundred years before, and at several other times and places. The first Methodist "Society," properly so called, was not formed until 1739, when Mr. Wesley organized "the United Society," at the Foundery in London. This, says THOMAS JACKSON, in his life of Charles Wesley, p. 179, "was the rise of the United Societies, which now constitute what is usually called the Wesleyan connection." The rules for their government were drawn up in 1743, by Wesley, when he divided the societies into classes.

Hence, all that one of our enemies has said about the Methodist church being composed in its origin of "four unregenerate young men," whose "*worship*" *was* "*reading the Greek and Latin classics*," is the offspring of downright frivolity, if not of deliberate wickedness.

After spending nearly six years as a tutor at Oxford, Mr. Wesley, having refused the rectorship of Epworth, made vacant by his father's death, sailed with his brother to Georgia, hoping "to raise up a holy people in that distant land." He was not very successful in his labors. The loose manners of the colonists called forth his sternest rebukes, which, with the strictness of his own life, and the stringency of his ecclesiastical discipline, excited great opposition. A bitter persecution, headed by a worthless official named CAUSTON, arose against him. The colony resounded with the outcries of his adversaries. They propagated all sorts of slanders about him, and finally presented him to the

grand jury. This jury, which was packed with his avowed enemies, brought in two bills containing ten counts, nine of which related to his ecclesiastical administration. The whole, if true, did not affect his moral or religious character in the smallest degree. But they were all either false or frivolous, as was shown in a paper sent to the trustees of the colony, by twelve of the jurors who dissented from the majority. After seeking in vain to obtain a hearing before the court, and seeing no opportunity for further usefulness in Georgia, Mr. Wesley, having given public notice of his intention, left Savannah, and returned to England, where he arrived, in February, 1738. After his departure, the true character of his chief persecutor, Mr. Causton, became apparent. That worthy had already left England, in disgrace, for a fraud on the government. Detected in a similar peculation in the colony, he was deposed from office by the Governor. And such was the reaction of public feeling in Mr. Wesley's

favor, that when Mr. WHITEFIELD visited Savannah, a few months after Wesley's departure, he wrote thus:—"The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America, under God, is inexpressible. *His name is very precious among the people!*"

The only fault committed by Mr. Wesley in Georgia, was his perhaps too rigid enforcement of the canons of his church. His moral character was unspotted. His religious life was strict, almost ascetic. For these things worldly-minded professors, and world-seeking colonists hated him. Methodists have no need to blush for that part of their founder's life spent in Georgia, albeit an unscrupulous scribbler has had the hardihood, in contradiction of all the facts in the case, to insinuate the contrary.

Up to the time of Wesley's return to England, he had not enjoyed a clear consciousness of faith in Christ. His religion was that of the legalist, consisting in unceasing devotion to the duties, unaccompanied by the consola-

tions, of an Evangelical faith. His voyage to America had introduced him to the Moravians. What he saw of their experience convinced him that his own religious life was defective, and prepared him to listen to his learned friend PETER BOHLER, through whose instructions he was led to trust in Christ alone for "the righteousness which is of faith." On the 24th of May, 1738, while listening to a discourse on Christian experience, he says: "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he and taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." He was then thirty-five years old.

With an overflowing heart Mr. Wesley now began to proclaim the doctrine of salvation by faith, first in the churches, and then, at the suggestion of his friend Whitefield, in the open air. The effect was instantaneous and wonderful. He seemed girded with power from above. Wherever he preached men were

pricked to the heart. Streams of blessings poured from heaven upon his labors. His brother Charles, his friend Whitefield, and several other clergymen of the church of England, were equally successful. Men and women were converted by thousands. The expiring dissenting churches of the day were quickened. New life impregnated British Protestantism. The infidelity of the age was rebuked. Hundreds of men were thrust out into the ministry. Societies were formed in all parts of the kingdom. A conference of ministers was organized, and, at length, a powerful connection established.

These results were not accomplished without great toils, great sacrifices, great sufferings. To achieve them, Mr. Wesley preached *forty thousand* sermons, and travelled *two hundred and twenty thousand miles.* He, with his coadjutors, also endured much persecution. I know it has been tauntingly said, that Methodism "cannot boast of the honors and unmistakeable characteristics of Christ's

church — the loss of *one drop of blood*, a beheaded saint, *persecution*, a flight, or having been hid from the rage of enemies for a season." "And that no Methodist was ever beheaded for his attachment to the truth; never persecuted to *death* or to *flight*, for his religion." (Iron Wheel, pp. 29, 32.)

These statements are slanderous. A man who would make them, would affirm that light is darkness, if it suited his purpose. Methodism never persecuted? Alas, how ignorant or depraved that writer must be who so affirms! Methodism never persecuted? What is the history of its infancy, but a record of persecutions? — aye, of persecutions as thrilling and severe as those recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. True, the fact of its rise in a Protestant and nominally Christian country, prevented its confessors from sealing their faith on the scaffold. But if it be persecution to suffer the loss of reputation, the spoiling of goods, personal violence, judicial accusations, imprisonment, fines, and to

be put in constant peril of life, then the early Methodists have suffered persecutions abundant, and the assertion of Mr. Graves is as false as his favorite dogma, that the Baptist is the only true church of Christ on earth.

Partly to confute his false assertion, and partly to refresh you with a few pictures of the unsurpassed heroism of the early Methodists, I have brought together a few facts from the history of the Wesleys.

I have already told you how the Wesleys were persecuted by their college associates at Oxford, and how John suffered for his religious strictness in Georgia. But when the devoted brothers broke away from the *order* of the church, and began their extraordinary career of evangelism, the outcry against them was so loud and general as to put them outside the pale of respectable society. They were excluded from the pulpits of the church of England, denounced by nearly all, regarded as enthusiasts and madmen, and treated as the "filth and offscouring of all things." So

strong did the current of prejudice run against these great and good men, that he who dared to defend them, periled his own reputation. 'How notorious is it," says Wesley, "that if a man dare to open his mouth in my favor, it needs only be replied, 'I suppose you are a Methodist too,' and all he has said is to pass for nothing!" A fact or two, selected at random from their memoirs, will show that this expression was far from being hyperbolical.

At St. Ives, the rector of the parish church publicly denounced Charles Wesley and the Methodists, as enemies of the church, seducers, troublers, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites. At Wednock, the curate, Charles Wesley being present, delivered himself of such a "hotch-potch of railing, foolish lies, as Satan himself might have been ashamed of." During his first visit to Cornwall the "clergy preached against him with great vehemence, and represented his character and designs in the worst possible light." At Cork, in Ire-

land, the grand jury found "Charles Wesley to be a person of ill fame, a vagabond, and a common disturber of his majesty's peace," and they prayed that "*he might be transported!*" And at Birstall, in 1744, a charge of *treason* was preferred against him, and a warrant issued summoning witnesses to appear against him!

If a good man's reputation is next in value to the purity of his character — if it be a jewel of higher value than the diadems of princes, dearer to a man of a high sense of honor than even life itself, then it is clear that the early Methodists demonstrated their fidelity, when they cast it away for Christ's sake. To say that a people who purchased their ecclesiastical existence with the loss of their reputation were never persecuted, is to drivel, not reason.

But the early Methodists did not escape with the loss of reputation alone. They were persecuted to the spoiling of their goods, to flight, to stoning, to suffering, and even to

death, as the following facts, selected at random from a multitude of similar events, will abundantly prove.

For crossing the field of an enemy to religion, to meet his congregation at Kensington Common, Charles Wesley was fined fifty dollars with costs, amounting to as much more.

At NOTTINGHAM, the rabble of the county laid waste all before them that belonged to the Methodists. Two of the brethren lost a thousand dollars' worth of their property.

At ST. IVES, while Charles Wesley was preaching, the people beat their drums, shouted, stopped their ears, ran upon him, and tried to pull him down. With a fearless spirit the heroic reformer retreated from these "lions' whelps," and escaped unhurt. At MORVA, just as he named his text, "an army of rebels broke in upon his meeting, threatening to murder the people. They broke the sconces, dashed the windows in pieces, bore away the shutters, benches, poor

box, and all but the stone walls. Several times they lifted their hands to strike Mr. Wesley, but a stronger arm restrained them. They beat and dragged the women about, particularly one of a great age, and "*trampled on them without mercy.*" At WEDNOCK, the mob, says Charles Wesley, assaulted us with sticks and stones, and endeavored to pull me down. Ten cowardly ruffians I saw upon one unarmed man, beating him with their clubs, till they felled him to the ground. Another escaped by the swiftness of his horse. At St. Ives, again, the mob threw eggs in at the windows. Others cast great stones to break what remained of the shutters. Others *struck the women*, and swore they would pull the house down.

During one of his tours in Ireland, Charles was riding with several brethren from Tyrrell's Pass, to Athlone, when he was beset by a company of Papists. One of his companions was knocked from his horse by a stone, beat in the face with a club, and would have

been killed with a knife but for timely aid. Another was struck on the head with a stone. Wesley received a violent blow in the back. But for the timely arrival of a company of dragoons from Athlone, the whole company would, in all probability, have been murdered. This murderous assault was planned and instigated by Father Ferrill, a Catholic priest.

At CORK, the Methodists were sorely persecuted. Any of the baser sort, from time to time, cut and beat both men and women, to the hazard of their lives. It was dangerous for any member of the society to be seen abroad.

At WEDNESBURY, in October, 1743, Mr. John Wesley was greatly maltreated by a mob, which was instigated to drive him out of the county by the incessant denunciations of the vicar of the place, the curate of Walsal, and the vicar of Darlastan.

After preaching at Wednesbury, Mr. Wesley retired to write at the house of a friend. The mob surrounded the house, shouting:

"Bring out the minister! We will have the minister!" After some parleying, Mr. Wesley showed himself at the door, and asked to go with them to a magistrate. It was now dark and raining. But they dragged him to Bentley Hall, two miles distant. From thence they took him to Walsal. At last they concluded to conduct him back to Wednesbury; but on their way met another mob, and fell to fighting among themselves. As they re-entered Wednesbury, Mr. Wesley seeing the door of a large house open, attempted to enter, but one of the mob caught him by the hair of the head and pulled him back into the middle of the crowd. They then carried him the entire length of the town. Seeing another door half open, Wesley made toward it, but was forbidden to enter by the owner, lest the mob should pull it down over his head.

Wesley now confronted his foes and asked, "Are you willing to hear me speak?"

"No! No! knock his brains out! Down

with him! Away with him, kill him at once; tear off his clothes! Drown him! Hang him on the next tree! Throw him into a pit!" yelled the mob, waxing increasingly furious.

"Nay, but we will hear him first!" cried others; while others again said, "Don't kill him here, carry him out of the town! Don't bring his blood upon us!"

He then spoke for a quarter of an hour, till his voice failed. The mob then renewed its shouts, threatening him with violence. At length, three or four stout fellows, one of whom was the ringleader, moved by a sudden impulse, resolved to rescue him. After much struggling and hustling, they got him out of the town, on to the meadows. When the crowd, wearied with its own violence, had retired, these men conducted him to his lodgings. His clothes were torn to tatters; he had been struck at repeatedly, and many had tried to pull him down.

During this frightful scene the members

of the society, excepting four who kept with him ready to die with him if they could not save him, had fled for their lives. Yet the mob threw one woman into the river, and broke the arm of a young man.

Commenting on his remarkable deliverance from this mob, Mr. Wesley refers to similar hair-breadth escapes from the "sons of Belial," in the following language: "Two years ago a piece of brick grazed my shoulders. It was a year after that a stone struck me between the eyes. Last month I received one blow, and this evening two; * * one man struck me on the breast with all his might and the other on the mouth, with such force that the *blood gushed out immediately!*"

When the ringleader of this furious mob was converted, as he was a very few days afterwards, Charles Wesley asked him what he thought of his brother. "Think of him!" he replied, "that he is a man of God, and God was on his side, when so many of us could not kill one man!"

At DUDLEY, says C. Wesley, the Methodist preacher was cruelly abused by a mob of Papists and dissenters. Probably he would have been murdered but for an honest Quaker who helped him to escape with his broad hat and coat.

At DARLASTON, rioters broke into the houses of the Methodists, robbing and destroying; and papers were sent round to the adjacent towns *inviting all the country to rise and destroy the Methodists!*

At NOTTINGHAM, says C. Wesley, I called at Bro. Saut's, and found him just brought home for dead. The mob had knocked him down, and would probably have murdered him, but for the cries of a little child. It was some time before he came to himself, having been struck on the temples by a large log of wood.

Up to 1744, the magistrates had generally refused to act, and had left the Methodists at the mercy of violent and cruel men. Then they interfered, and endeavored by an abuse

of their power, and the perversion of law, to crush a defenceless people. This made their condition worse.

Another species of indignity to which the early Methodist preachers were subjected was their impressment into the British army, on the pretence that their occupation was irregular, and their lives vagabondish. Among those who suffered in this way, were JOHN NELSON, THOMAS BEARD, MR. DOWNES, and MR. MAXFIELD. These devoted brethren were torn from their families, shut up in prison, and compelled to do military duty until their friends procured their deliverance by application to the heads of the Government, or by procuring substitutes. But poor THOMAS BEARD found deliverance through death only. He was too delicate to endure the fatigues of a soldier's life. He sank beneath the burden, and died as truly a martyr to Christianity as Paul or Peter.

But I must cease my citations. I could fill this volume with the details of the per-

secutions endured by the first generation of Methodists for the Gospel's sake. No historic fact is more certain than that Mr. Wesley, with most of his early preachers could adopt in substance, the language of the persecuted and laborious Paul, and say, "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned. * * In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils amongst false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

But notwithstanding these undeniable facts, a living Baptist preacher dares to assert that Methodism was *never persecuted to the loss of a drop of blood, or to flight!* And a Congregational minister in the State of Massachusetts endorses him. Strange assertion! Deformed offspring of a mind willingly ignorant of the true history of the church it ma-

ligns! Its author cannot credit his own assertion, unless he is

> "Like one
> Who having to untruth, by telling of it,
> Made such a sinner of his memory,
> To credit his own lie."

Having endured "hardness like a good soldier," and having reached the green old age of eighty-eight, John Wesley died, March 2d, 1791. His death was as beautiful as his life was active. He retained his vigor to the last, and died almost on the field of battle, exclaiming, as he prepared to cast aside his mortal robe: "THE BEST OF ALL IS, GOD IS WITH US. He causeth his servant to lie down in peace. The Lord is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. I'll praise. I'll praise! Farewell." And thus, with the song of a conqueror on his lips, he ascended to heaven.

Before calling your attention to the spiritual structure founded by this great reformer, I will point out some interesting resem-

blances between him and the hero of the "Reformation," MARTIN LUTHER. Though somewhat episodical, I know you will not object to it, because you are anxious to attain a true conception of the founder of our church.

To begin with their birth, I find LUTHER born and nursed in the lap of respectable poverty. WESLEY had a kindred origin. For, although the family at EPWORTH could boast a higher lineage and a superior social grade to that of the German miner, yet, it is questionable whether the pecuniary straits of the good rector, Wesley's father, at Epworth, were not as pinching as those of Luther's peasant parents at EISLEBEN. And, if young Luther, after the fashion of poor German students, sung songs at EISENACH for bread, young Wesley, like many other English scholars, obtained his education from the munificent provisions of the Charter House, and from a foundation scholarship at Christchurch; at which places he doubtless endured more

from the merciless despotism practised upon a poor "fag" in those days, than Luther ever suffered in his peregrinations as a beggar student.

Intellectually, they appear to have belonged to the same high grade of minds. They were both master spirits, "large in heart and brain;" yet, perhaps, neither of them can properly be classed with the very highest order of philosophic intellects, the splendor of whose genius places them in unapproachable grandeur, far above the ordinary level of mankind. Still, they were great men, and men of extraordinary powers. To both, the acquisition of learning was easy; and, as in their youth both led a scholastic life, they became superior scholars, thoroughly versed in the classics, well read in general literature, in theology, and particularly in the Holy Scriptures. Both had remarkably ready and retentive memories; large powers of perception and comparison; and hence, they both became admirable dialecticians.

In original imaginative power, I incline to give the palm to Luther; while, in everything relating to taste, the laurel must be placed on the brow of Wesley. They both appear to have possessed the power of realising truth in an unusual degree. To them, their ideas were as living presences, in whose reality and truthfulness they believed as firmly as in their own consciousness. Hence proceeded that wondrous vigor which characterized their preaching and writing; which made their thoughts glow with the energy of life, and gave their words a force that was irresistible and overwhelming.

In their early religious experience, we find some points of dissimilitude. Luther, though always bearing an unstained moral character, was not serious in his childhood and youth. He relished the facetious and military amusements so beloved by German students; and his mind turned with strong aversion from the serious aspects of the priesthood, and even from the gravity of the law. A

sudden judgment — the death of a companion, struck down at his side by a flash of lightning — first turned his mind to sober thoughts of spiritual things. That catastrophe, acting upon his impulsive nature, led to a sudden revolution in his purposes. It sent him to the monastery at ERFURT. It made him a priest.

But Wesley was always serious. His pure life knew no episode of frivolity or worldly folly. At the age of eight years he partook of the sacrament, and was grave and prayerful from his boyhood to his tomb. Yet had they this in common: they both struggled for a long time in darkness, through ignorance of the great doctrine of justification by faith. Both sought for peace on the ascetic principle — by works. Bitter tears did Luther shed in his lonesome cell, cruel penances did he undergo, long fastings and weary watchings did he endure, in the vain hope of finding relief. And by severe self-denial, by long and frequent prayers, by self-sacrificing

acts of benevolence, Wesley toiled to secure intercourse with Heaven. Of course they both failed. But in the conflict the monk of Erfurt suffered more than the "fellow" of Oxford; for his mental agonies well nigh cost him his reason. This was partly owing to the solitude in which he lived. His mind had no relief through contact with the world. It was shut up to its own reflections. Had Wesley, with his almost equally intense mind, been confined, like his great prototype, he had doubtless suffered with equal anguish. But he, while unresting and sad at heart, found some relief for his feelings in the ceaseless, self-imposed activity of his life.

Luther penetrated the gloom which enveloped him, unaided by man. By profound reflection on the Word of God, illuminated by the Divine Spirit, he discovered the sweet doctrine that man is justified by faith alone. This delightful truth broke in upon his long, dark night of grief, like a bright and beautiful star, and it guided him to a peace so de-

lightful that he declared it was like entering the open portals of Paradise.

It was otherwise with Wesley. He was led to the discovery of this cardinal truth by the guidance of human minds. To me it is one of the most wonderful facts in history, that a mind so clear and logical, so well read in the homilies of his church, and the writings of the Reformers, so conversant with the Bible, so sincere, so earnest in its seekings after truth, should miss of finding this simple doctrine. What is it but a singular illustration of human blindness in spiritual things, without the light of the Holy Spirit? Perhaps it was necessary to fit the learned Oxonian for his mission, that his steps should be directed to Christ through the instrumentality of the simple-hearted Moravians.

But these great spirits resembled each other in that utter unselfishness and purity of intention which are the essential elements of the martyr-spirit. Luther's worldly interests were on the side of silence towards the

abuses of the papacy. Had he sought to secure them, there is little question that he might have worn a mitre. The same is true of Wesley. But the history of both men shows that, in their respective movements, they ignored all selfish considerations, and deliberately placed wealth, reputation, and personal safety on the altar of duty. Wedded to truth, they were dead to all other voices and charms. Hence, Luther, with all his greatness, lived in poverty, and died leaving only a house and a legacy of a thousand florins to his beloved CATHARINE, and her children. Wesley, too, though considerable sums of money passed through his hands, died comparatively a poor man, owing to his systematic and princely benevolence, having no property except his publications, which he bequeathed to the connection.

Again, I see a marked agreement between them in their habit of acting independently, and from their own self-determinations. Neither of them despised the counsels of

other men, but neither acted from *mere* advice. Their decisions were made from the depths of their own minds, after a calm and careful survey of the path to be trodden, and prayerful application to Heaven for light. Thus, Luther's first denunciations of TETZEL, his burning of the papal bull, his appearance before the diet at Worms, his marriage with the nun, CATHARINE VON BORA, with all his great movements, proceeded from his own purposes independently formed, and carried out on his own personal responsibility. The same things are equally true of Wesley. His own mind always chose the path he trod, and chose it distinctly as being its own choice — its own view of duty. Eminently, therefore, did these great men possess the quality of self-determination.

In *courage*, too, they were equally heroic and sublime. They both stood firm and undaunted in danger; immovable and unchangeable in difficulty. Luther's courage is unquestionable. The man, who, with the fate of

Huss before his eyes, with the dust of unnumbered martyrs floating on the winds over every part of Europe, could stand up and strike a blow, for which they had perished, who dared to smite a foe, which, Briarius like, could stretch forth a hundred arms of power, and whose voice made monarchs tremble in their palaces — that man was no coward! Without the loftiest courage how could he have stood undaunted in the German Diet, before nearly three hundred dignitaries, to assert truths, which, for a thousand years, men had not dared to speak? The brave knight, George Frundsberg, did not overestimate his peril, when he said to him as he entered the diet: "Monk! look to it! you are about to hazard a more perilous march than we have ever done!" But he did hazard it, with more than knightly courage: and his bravery stands unimpeachable.

Nor was Wesley less courageous than Luther. True, he never threw himself on the bosses of the papal buckler, for he had no

occasion; nor did he ever confront a royal diet; but he did frequently do that which demanded equal self-possession, and equal heroism. He stood unappalled in the midst of furious mobs which clamored for his life, and threatened to tear him in pieces. The man who could do this, could have denounced the Vatican, or stood unmoved in the halls of kings, had circumstances required. His courage, like Luther's, grew out of an absorption in the great object of his mission, so complete as to make him superior to every sign of personal danger. As in the Royal Diet, Luther forgot himself in his desire to give utterance to truth; so, in the mobs of England, Wesley's heart burned with a desire to save his angry enemies, so earnest, it excluded all thoughts of himself. The courage of both rested on moral principles, for neither of them possessed that *natural* courage which led NELSON to say he "never knew fear;" and which rendered him perfectly indifferent amid showers of cannon balls. The terror

of Luther at his companion's death, and Wesley's fear of death in the Atlantic storm, show that their natural courage was not uncommon. Theirs was a moral heroism, sustained by moral forces, and not by mere animal stoicism.

In zeal, in moral energy, in unceasing industry, they were both examples. Luther did the duties of a university professor, of a preacher, and an author. His writings, like Wesley's, are a library in themselves; while the amount of travel and of preaching performed by Wesley almost exceeds belief.

As writers, they are alike distinguished by the nervousness, vigor, directness, and boldness of their style. Luther is the better polemic of the two; Wesley the more spiritual and apostolic; Luther is diffuse; Wesley is concise and epigrammatic; Luther uses the most rhetoric, but it is sometimes rude and coarse; while Wesley, rigidly simple and unadorned, always writes with purity, and even delicacy. Both are distinguished for their

habit of deferential appeal to the Scriptures as the source of all authority, and the only standard of truth.

Viewing their religious character, we give the preference to Wesley. His repose on Christ was more calm and abiding than that of the great German. Luther was subject to tormenting mental conflicts, and to seasons of deep depression. Wesley rested in calm, almost undisturbed, composure upon God. Luther was less meek, less patient, less gentle than Wesley. He dealt more harshly with his adversaries, and displayed a temper and stubbornness, at times, which mar the beauty of his piety. Wesley, on the contrary, was mild and gentle, even toward his enemies. Though he exercised a vast amount of power over his societies, toward the last of his life, yet he never used it harshly or severely. He regarded his societies as his family, his children, beloved in Christ; and his authority was that of the mildest and most tender parent. But it ought not to be

forgotten that Wesley's early training, by his excellent mother, gave him the advantage, in matters of self-discipline, over Luther. Besides this, the manners and spirit of Luther's times must be considered. He had to do with headstrong and fiery minds, and to endure harrassing trials; he had to watch against an intriguing priesthood, who thirsted, like wolves, for his blood. In fact, his public life was mostly passed in a whirlpool of tumultuous human passions. That he should, under such circumstances, yield, at times, to the natural impetuosity of his temper, is not surprising. Had he, however, possessed the clear, triumphant faith of Wesley, he might have won a more perfect victory, and have become a more complete example of the truth he taught.

Other points of comparison crowd upon me, but I forbear; and close with a glance at their respective labors. Yet who can either estimate or compare the labors of these two reformers? To estimate the value of their

work is impossible; for it is, as yet, incomplete. They still live. Their spirits still animate society, and not until the last judgment will it be possible to measure the extent and value of the work they wrought.

But their labors may be compared. Thus viewed, the reformation of Luther appears to have prepared the way for the Wesleyan revival. Luther's mission was chiefly to emancipate thought — to set mind free from the chains of authority — to teach ecclesiastical and civil rulers, that they have no control over the human conscience. The means by which he did this, was the simple assertion of evangelical doctrine in opposition to papal heresies. He affirmed every man's individual right to judge of all questions of truth and duty, independently of priest, pope, or council. By thus establishing the paramount authority of conscience and Scripture, he paralyzed the arm of the Papacy, he freed vast numbers from its bondage, and taught them to exercise the right of private judgment, and

of freedom to worship God. In the performance of this great work, the truths he uttered became a seed of *spiritual* life to many; but, mainly, his reformation was rather a reformation of opinion — a declaration of religious liberty — than a spiritual revival.

In this mixed form the "reformation found its way to Great Britain, where it produced the Scottish Covenanter, and the English Puritan. By their sturdy fidelity, and by their swords, the great idea of the Lutheran Reformation — religious liberty — was firmly established in British institutions; but its *spiritual* element, when Mr. Wesley appeared, had well nigh exhausted itself, and spiritual religion was almost extinct there, and throughout the world.

Wesley's mission was, therefore, to revive the spiritual element of the Lutheran Reformation. But for Luther, he would have had to do Luther's work. But that being done, the doctrine of religious liberty being understood and established, it was given to him to

spread a new religious life throughout his country and the world. This, by the grace of God, he accomplished. His voice woke the reformation from its slumber, roused it to an evangelic vitality — such as it never previously enjoyed; and which has since spread itself through many lands. Thus while Luther's work prepared the way for Wesley, Wesley put new life into the Lutheran Reformation, and pushed it to glorious spiritual results. And now that the Christian life, evoked by their instrumentality, flows on, in one widening, deepening, branching stream of blessedness, to all parts of the earth; ere long, all nations shall hail it with joy; and, when all have tasted its blessedness, the world will do equal honor to both, as great, good, and mighty men of God, entrusted by him to do a good work, and as having proved faithful in the execution of that high trust. May their spirit live and abide in the church forever. Amen!

CHAPTER VII.

RISE AND GROWTH OF METHODISM.

AS from the smitten rock in the wilderness, the abundant waters flowed at the bidding of the Almighty, to quench the thirst of a feverish and fainting people, so did Methodism flow forth to give fresh life to the expiring Christianity of the age. Its birth was from above, and its author was the Holy Ghost. The Wesleys, Whitefield, and their coadjutors, were only the instruments of its propagation. On being powerfully converted, those holy men, following the impulses of the spiritual life, went forth preaching the truth, and seeking to spread scriptural holiness over the land of their birth. The idea of founding a church, did not enter into their conceptions

for many years; and when it appeared necessary to the spiritual welfare of his *societies* that they should be organized into *churches*, Mr. Wesley accepted the idea as a necessity, and provided for its realization with manifest reluctance. He had no ambition to be the founder of a sect. That honor was awarded him by the Providence of God.

I have attributed the rise of Methodism to the Spirit of God. Am I not right? Whence did it come, if not from the workings of that Holy Being? It certainly did not spring from the English Episcopal Church, for that church did not give the Wesleys a clear conception of the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith only. They were indebted for their perception of that truth to Peter Bohler, and the Moravian brethren. Hence, the human instrumentality through which the spiritual life of Methodism flowed, was not the Episcopal, but the Moravian Church; a fact which sufficiently answers all the rant of the "Iron Wheel" about the relations of

Methodism to the English Episcopal Church. But the Moravians were only *instruments*. The life of Methodism came from heaven, when, on the evening of May 24, 1738, God "strangely warmed" John Wesley's heart, and gave him assurance that he "had taken away" his sins.

That experience was Mr. Wesley's Pentecost. Three days before, Charles had experienced a similar baptism. By the self-same Spirit, the brothers were made new men in Christ Jesus. Hitherto, they had been *servants;* now they were *children*. From this time, as with the Apostles after their Pentecost, a divine energy attended their preaching. Vast multitudes were awakened and converted. These new-born souls, attracted to their spiritual parents and to each other, by the affinities of their new interior life, met, like the disciples in the primitive church, for prayer and spiritual fellowship. They desired Mr. Wesley's advice. For the sake of convenience and order, he formed them first

into societies, and then into classes. When these societies multiplied, he drew up "rules" for their government. When the Holy Spirit moved numbers of the converts to preach the gospel, Wesley employed them, with manifest reluctance at first, to call the nation to repentance. When these preachers increased, and God had abundantly owned their labors, he was fully satisfied that their vocation was from above; and, therefore, in 1744, he formed them into a Conference. Thus he proceeded, step by step, wisely providing for exigencies as they arose, but never anticipating the progress of events. His aim was strictly a spiritual one. His personal wish was that his societies should remain in connection with the Established Church. But God overruled that wish, and he was compelled, at last, to give them the only remaining thing necessary to constitute them churches of Christ, viz.: the privilege of having the sacraments administered by their own preachers, and in their own houses of wor-

ship. When this was yielded, they ceased to be mere *societies in a church* — they became churches of Christ, having within themselves all the elements which went to make up the apostolic church, viz.: an interior life derived from the Holy Spirit, the preached Word, the ordinances of the gospel, meetings for Christian fellowship, government. In one word, they were essentially identical with the first church at Jerusalem, which is described as receiving the "word," the ordinances, and as continuing in "fellowship" and in prayers. See Acts 2:41, 42.

Such, in brief, was the rise of Methodism in England. Small in its beginning — a cloud no bigger than a man's hand — it grew with wonderful rapidity. It throve in spite of the scorn of the rich, the contumely of the proud, the persecutions of the ministry, (the dissenting clergy not excepted,) and the barbarity of mobs. Like the chamomile, the more it was trampled upon, the more it flourished. Hence, when Mr. Wesley died, *fifty-*

two years after he organized the first Methodist Society, properly so called, his societies in Great Britain alone, included upwards of *eighty thousand* souls!

In America, the rise of Methodism was also distinctly marked by the finger of God. His providence provided for its existence on this Continent through several instruments. To New York he directed the steps of PHILIP EMBURY, a local preacher from Ireland, who arrived in that city in 1765. The absence of spiritual help, and the irreligious influence of the time, caused Mr. Embury to neglect his soul, and to grow worldly. To revive him, God led an elect lady, BARBARA HICK, with her family, from Ireland to New York. In her heart the fires of grace burned gloriously. Her rebuke awoke the backsliding local preacher to a sense of duty. He returned to his Redeemer, preached the gospel in his own house, formed a class, hired a room for public worship, and thus laid the foundations of the Methodist temple on this Continent.

But if these emigrants at New York had failed to plant the good seed of Methodism, CAPTAIN WEBB, converted under Wesley, a "man of fire," was residing in Albany, faithfully cherishing the life of God, and ready to embrace the first opportunity to sow the living seed of truth. But Embury was before him in the work; and him the Captain greatly assisted while in New York on a visit, and afterwards when he became a resident of Jamaica, L. I. By their mutual labors, Methodism was planted in New York. In 1768, it sent out its utterances from its first American chapel on Golden Hill, in John Street.

Still another instrument for its propagation rose up in Maryland, in the person of ROBERT STRAWBRIDGE, also a local preacher from Ireland. He brought a warm heart over the Atlantic, and, like a faithful man, began preaching in his own house, as soon as he was fairly settled. His success was such that a society was formed, and a log chapel built, about as early as the chapel in New York.

Thus you see how God cared for Methodism in America, by directing these local preachers to three different points, and by guiding the steps of a pious matron to the doors of the slumbering Philip. Was ever event more signally marked by the finger of God?

I cannot detain you to watch the growth of this "mustard seed," as it grew into the great tree which it has since become. It is enough to state, that in the brief period of little more than a century from its original planting, it has become the largest, fairest, stateliest of ecclesiastical trees; its branches overspread the earth, its fruit imparts life to *over two millions* of communicants, and its doctrines are preached to probably *not less than ten millions* of the human race!

Nowhere has Methodism spread more rapidly than in this country. From its first enunciation by Philip Embury until now, its advance — in spite of fierce opposition, unprincipled misrepresentation, and bitter per-

secution — has been firm, rapid, wonderful. You know, perhaps, that attempts are being made to prove that Methodism has reached its climax, and is now "dying out." I do not suppose that those who are engaged in this hopeless task really believe their own assertions. They cannot, certainly, if they understand whereof they write. This, they are not careful to do. It does not suit their purpose to deal in well authenticated and fairly presented facts. Their aim is not to tell the truth, but to retard the progress of Methodism, which they most religiously hate. Their tactics are those of politicians. By daring and reckless assertions, which they know the mass of their readers will not be at the pains to investigate, they endeavor to create an impression that proofs of premature decay are already manifest in our body. These assertions are sustained by a specious arrangement of statistics, which, being echoed and re-echoed by their partizans, over the country, are expected to work injury to us wherever they are repeated.

Against these statements, I wish to put you on your guard. They are false, utterly, absolutely false. Methodism is not declining. Its numbers were never so great as now. Its ratio to the whole population was never so large as at present. Those who seek to produce a show of proof to the contrary, do so by selecting the years 1842 and 1843 as the starting points of their calculation — the only years in our history from which any appearance of numerical declension can be made out. I protest against this arbitrary selection of a starting point, because it contains the *maximum* numbers of a decade, just as I would protest against a friend of Methodism, if he were to select a year in which our numbers had reached the *minimum* of any given period as the starting point of his calculations. The fair method of computing the numerical progress of any community, society, or church, is, to compare its numbers through a long space of time, and through equal and specific periods. This

I propose to do. Not that I am anxious about our numbers; for our church might be standing still numerically through several years, and not be "dying out." She might be increasing in her hold on society, in inward culture, in inborn strength, and in fitness for a renewal of her aggressive efforts, and the extension of her domains. But I wish to state the truth, and to give you the means of rebutting the false calculations of our adversaries.

The tables given below cover over half a century. The numbers for each decade, are for the year immediately following that on which each national census was taken.* They show that Methodism, which up to 1765 had not a single representative in the country, which was not ecclesiastically organ-

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**Increase of the M. E. Church, by decades, from 1791 to 1854.*

In 1791,	Memb. M. E. Ch.,	63,269,	*An increase in 10 years of*
1801,	" "	72,874,	9,605, or 15½ per ct.
1811,	" "	184,567,	111,693, or 153¼ "
1821,	" "	281,146,	96,579, or 52¼ "
1831	" "	513,114,	231,968, or 82½ "
1841,	" "	859,811,	346,697, or 67½ "
1851,	(North & South,)	1,251,198,	391,387, or 45½ "
1854,	"	1,386,661,	135,463 *for 3 years.*

ized until 1784, *now* has more than *one million three hundred thousand communicants;* that during the last half century the ratio of our communicants to the entire population has increased from *one in sixty-two and a half* to *one in eighteen and a half*, or including the various branches of Methodism.

The next table shows how the *per centage* of our increase compares with that of the entire population of the country.

The population increased from		1790 to 1800	35.02 per ct.
Methodism,	"	1791 to 1801	15.20 "
The population,	"	1800 to 1810	36.45 "
Methodism,	"	1801 to 1811	153.50 "
The population,	"	1810 to 1820	33.13 "
Methodism,	"	1811 to 1821	52.33 "
The population,	"	1820 to 1830	33.49 "
Methodism,	"	1821 to 1831	82.50 "
The population,	"	1830 to 1840	32.67 "
Methodism,	"	1831 to 1841	67.50 "
The population,	"	1840 to 1850	35.87 "
Methodism,	"	1841 to 1851	45.50 "

Thus it appears that the per centage of our increase has been decidedly greater than that of the aggregate population of the country.

A comparison of our *numbers* with the whole population, will show a rapidly increasing ratio. Thus, beginning with 1791, seven years after the organization of our church, we have the following results:

In 1791 one Methodist to about every			62½ of the whole pop
1801	"	"	72½ "
1811	"	"	39½ "
1821	"	"	30 "
1831	"	"	25 "
1841	"	"	19¾ "
1851	"	"	18½ "

(not embraced in these tables, but numbering over one hundred and thirteen thousand communicants,) our ratio has advanced from *one in sixty-two and a half to one in seventeen* — a very gratifying increase on the population of the country. Is not this a wonderful increase? Could it have been gained if the Lord had not been on the side of his people?

But how is it with New England? Has Methodism in the East kept pace with general Methodism? We should hardly expect it to do so, because it labors under peculiar difficulties, and against peculiar obstacles here. It has suffered, too, for the last fifteen years, a very heavy annual loss from emigration. California, Oregon, and the Western States generally, contain thousands of persons, who were formerly members of our church in New England. Much of our increase in the West is the fruit of Eastern Methodism. But those emigrants are lost to us in New England. Their removal, in many instances, more than decimated whole churches, and in some cases left societies too fee-

ble for self-maintenance. It would not be strange, therefore, if our numbers did show a decrease in the Eastern Conferences. What are the facts? The tables given below* will

* The following tables contain the numbers in the New England Conferences, from 1796 to 1855, a period of 59 years, together with the average annual increase during each period. Those parts of New England embraced in the Troy and New York East Conferences are not included in the first tables.

	Conferences.	*Members.*		
1796	1	2,519		
1820		17,739	Average annual increase,	634
1830	3	35,227	" "	1,748
1840		64,997	" "	2,977
1850	6	65,640	" "	64
1855		70,474	" "	966

Let us next see what is our per centage of increase compared with the population of New England, through a period of fifty-four years.

In N. E. the pop. increased from		1800 to 1810	19.34 per ct.
Methodism	"	" "	92 "
New England	"	1810 to 1820	12.77 "
Methodism	"	" "	58 "
New England	"	1820 to 1830	17.77 "
Methodism	"	" "	98.50 "
New England	"	1830 to 1840	14.33 "
Methodism	"	" "	85 "
New England	"	1840 to 1850	22.07 "
Methodism	"	" "	.99 "
Methodism	"	1850 to 1855	7.36 "

The next table shows the *ratio of our increase* in New England, compared with that of the population.

In 1800 there was	1	Methodist	in every	211	of the pop. of N. E.
1810 "	1	"		131	"
1820 "	1	"		94	"
1830 "	1	"		56	"
1840 "	1	"		34	"
1850 "	1	"		41	"
1855 "	1	"		38	"

show you that our rate of increase in New England, was highest between 1820 and 1840, and lowest between 1840 and 1850. But *during no decade has Methodism ceased to advance!* The *ratio* of our progress fell immensely between 1840 and 1850. But were there not various causes tending to that result? 1. There was the great drain by *emigration* spoken of above. 2. The division of the church occurred in that decade, and the discussion growing out of it was not without its result on the spirituality and activity of our people, even in New England. 3. The agitation and the consequent losses by secession growing out of the organization of the "Wesleyan Church," belong to the same period. 4. The Millerite excitement, with the subsequent spiritual deadness which overspread the churches generally, occurred in the same decade. 5. The fluctuations which were experienced in various branches of manufacture throughout New England must also be taken into account. Our people be-

ing largely composed of mechanics and persons dependent on their labor, are materially affected in their location, and frequently driven to emigrate to other parts of the country, by every adverse change which occurs in manufacturing towns. 6. Our people have been largely engaged in erecting and rebuilding church edifices, and otherwise strengthening and consolidating themselves in all parts of the Eastern States, and were never in so good a position, socially and economically, as now.

Thus it appears that there are causes sufficient to account for that retardation in our rate of progress, which marks the decade preceding 1850, without resorting to the supposition that our vitality is declining. Many of the evil influences of that decade have passed away. It is true, emigration still drains our societies; but, notwithstanding this, our rate of progress has greatly improved since 1850. Should it be maintained to the close of the current decade, we shall

have in 1860, a membership in New England of 80,220. As it is, our tables show, 1. That in *fifty-eight* years we have increased from 2,519 members to 70,474. 2. That there has been no decade in which we have failed to make some advance. 3. That our *per centage of increase* has largely exceeded the per centage of increase in the population, during every decade, *with a single exception* — i. e., 1840–50. 4. That fifty-five years ago there was one Methodist in New England to every *two hundred and eleven* of the population. Last year, there was one to every THIRTY-EIGHT! or, adding the more than 20,000 members in the New England States which belong to the New York East and Troy Conferences, there was in 1855 one Methodist to every TWENTY-NINE of the population in New England.

In the following note I have given the statistics of New England Methodism in comparison with those of the Baptists and Congregationalists, (Orthodox,) on the same ground.

You will learn from them, what I know will gratify you, — that Methodism in New England is *second in numbers* and FIRST IN PROGRESS! The Baptists are *third* in numbers and *second* in progress. The Congregationalists are *first* in numbers and *third* in progress.*

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* The first table shows the increase of the Congregational (Orthodox) Churches in New England, from 1841 to 1855, a period of *fourteen* years.

Assoc'ns.	1841.	1855.	Increase in 14 years.
Conn.,	35,688	38,083	2,395 or 6.71 per cent.
Mass.,	57,563	67,195	9,632 or 16.78 "
N. Hamp.,	17,581	20,022	2,441 or 13.88 "
R. Island,	2,577	2,717	140 or 5.43 "
Maine,	17,338	16,937 (*dec.*)	401 or 2.31 " (*loss.*)
Vermont,	22,666	17,705 (*dec.*)	4,961 or 21.88 " (*loss.*)
Totals,	153,413	162,659	9,246 or 6.02 per cent.

The following table gives the increase of the Baptists in New England from 1840 to 1854, a period of *fourteen* years.

Assocn's.	1840.	1854.	Increase in 14 years.
Conn.,	11,725	16,907	5,182 or 44.10 per cent.
Maine,	20,490	19,355 (*dec.*)	1,135 or 5.53 " (*loss.*)
Mass.,	26,311	31,854	5,543 or 21.06 "
N. Hamp.,	9,557	8,229 (*dec.*)	1,328 or 13.89 " (*loss.*)
R. Island,	5,962	7,357	1,395 or 23.39 "
Vermont,	11,101	7,851 (*dec.*)	3,250 or 29.27 " (*loss.*)
Totals,	85,146	91,553	6,407 or 7.52 per cent.

The next table gives the progress of our own church, in New England, from 1841 to 1855, a period of *fourteen* years, omitting the 20 to 23,000 members belonging to the New York, New York East, and Troy Conferences.

This result affords matter of gratitude to Almighty God. That in some sixty years we should have gained a membership considerably more than half as large as the Congregationalists, who for more than a century had almost undisputed possession of the territory,

Conf's.	1841.		1855.	Increase in 14 years.
N. E.,	12,082		16,152	4,070 or 32.85 per ct.
N. H.,	19,425	N H. 11,162, Vt., 7,844,	19,006 (*dec.*)	429 or 2.20 " (*loss.*)
Me.,	22,844	Me., 10,737, E.M., 9,533,	20,270 (*dec.*)	2,574 or 11.26 " (*loss.*)
Prov.,	10,664		15,046	4,382 or 41.09 "
Totals,	65,025		70,474	5,449 or 8.37 per ct.

To make the *results* of these tables more apparent, I will recapitulate them as follows: —

Cong's	from 1841 to 1855, 14 yrs,	gained	9,246 or 6.02	per cent
Bapt's	" 1840 to 1854, 14	"	6,407 or 7.52	"
Meth's	" 1841 to 1855, 14	"	5,449 or 8.37	"

The succeeding table gives the *ratio* of increase in each denomination since 1840, compared with the population of the New England States.

In 1841	there was one	Congregationalist	in every	14	of the pop.
1855	"	"	"	16	"
1840	"	Baptist	"	26	"
1855	"	"	"	29	"
1841	"	Methodist	"	34	"
1855	"	"	"	38	"

Including the 22,000 members — our estimated numbers in those parts of Connecticut, Western Massachusetts, and Vermont, embraced in the New York, New York East, and Troy Conferences — we get the following ratios for Methodism: —

In 1841, one Methodist in every 25 of the population.
1855, one Methodist in every 29 of the population.

and who, when we came here, enjoyed the prestige of wealth, social status, and culture, is an astonishing fact, demanding our warmest thankfulness, and encouraging our most sanguine hopes. Our advance in the race of progress beyond our Baptist brethren is equally gratifying. They started a century and a half before we entered New England. They had a membership of some 20,000 members when Jesse Lee appeared in the arena. Since then they have increased nearly five fold, yet Methodism has outstripped them, both in numbers and rate of progress.

With these illustrations of the rapid growth of our church, you cannot fail to be impressed with the idea that Methodism has been signally favored of God. Remember, it is not a church which either tolerates formality, or permits immoralities in its members; but a church teaching men to deny themselves, to forsake all sin, to attain personal holiness, and enforcing this teaching with a stricter discipline than any other branch of the

church. How, then, can you account for its growth except on the admission that God is in it; that Jesus smiles upon it; that the Spirit pours his constant benediction upon it? Believing this, you need not hesitate to enter its fellowship, for in Methodism, as "in Judah, God is known; his name is great in Israel. In Salem, also, is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion."

CHAPTER VIII.

SPIRITUAL RESULTS OF METHODISM.

TO understand the spiritual results of Methodism, my dear reader, you must first glance at the religious condition of England and America, at the epoch of its rise.

What was the spiritual state of England prior to the appearance of the Wesleyan evangelists? I do not exaggerate when I say that it was in the lowest possible condition of religious torpor and indifference. The shadow of an almost starless night spread over the land. The clergy of the Established Church were mostly unconverted men, teachers of a Pelagian theology, and sadly lacking in that high purity of life which is so essential to ministerial influence. The

Presbyterian clergy were mostly floating in the putrid sea of a self-indulgent Antinomianism, or gliding in luxuriant ease down the smooth waters of a self-complacent Socinianism. The dissenting clergy, generally were lethargic, formal, dead. DODDRIDGE, WATTS, and a few others, were bright exceptions; but their influence was limited to narrow circles; their light scarcely relieved the general gloom.

As it was with the clergy, so it was with their flocks. The churches seemed under the power of a Lethean draught. They mostly slept, as if oblivious of the calls of duty, the warnings of retribution, and the woes of humanity.

As a consequence, irreligion stalked over the land with a haughty, philosophic skepticism at her right hand; a coarse, blustering infidelity at her left; and a host of blear-eyed immoralities in her train. The nobles, the statesmen, the literary men of England, did not scruple to deride evangelical religion with their lips, and to insult its moralities in

their practice. "There was no *thinking* at that time," says Isaac Taylor, "which was not atheistical in its tone and tendency." The middle classes were immersed in the sea of avarice; the lower orders were abandoned to the grossest vices. "The moral and religious defection which obtained," says DR. MORRISON, "was *extraordinary and almost universal.*" "The higher ranks of society," says DR. CORBETT, "viewed the ordinances of religion with indifference, and the poorer classes had sunk into the grossest vices." In Calvinistic Scotland, the case was no better. REV. JAMES ROBIE, of Kilsyth, in 1740, said: "For some years past there hath been a sensible decay as to the life and power of godliness. Iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold. Our defection from the Lord, and backsliding, increased fast to a *dreadful apostacy.* While the government, worship and DOCTRINE, established in this church WERE RETAINED IN PROFESSION, THERE HATH BEEN AN UNIVERSAL CORRUPTION OF

LIFE, reaching even unto the sons and daughters of God."

Was the spiritual condition of America any better when Whitefield, glowing with Methodistic life, visited its coasts; and when, subsequently, Philip Embury raised the banner of Methodism in New York? Let Mr. Tracy, the historian of the "Great Awakening," answer. Referring to the period of Whitefield's labors, he says:

"The doctrine of the 'new birth' as an ascertainable change, *was not generally prevalent* in any communion when the revival commenced."

"The difference between the church and the world was vanishing away. Church discipline was neglected, and the *growing laxness of morals was invading the churches.* And yet never, perhaps, had the expectation of reaching heaven at last, been more general, or more confident. Occasional revivals had interrupted this downward progress, and the *preaching of sound doctrine* had retarded

it in many places, especially in Northampton: but *even there it had gone on*, and the hold of truth on the consciences of men was sadly diminished. The young were abandoning themselves to frivolity, and amusements of dangerous tendency, and party spirit was producing its natural fruit of evil on the old."

Again he says (in 1740): "A large majority in the Presbyterian church, and *many, if not most, in New England*, held that the *ministrations of unconverted men* if neither heretical in doctrine nor scandalous for immorality, were valid, and their labors useful."

Of the churches in Rhode Island, in 1740, WHITEFIELD, as quoted by Tracy, says: "ALL, I fear, place the kingdom of God too much in meats and drinks, and have an ill name abroad for running of goods."

Again he says, while in Boston, "I am verily persuaded the *generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ;* and the reason why congregations have been so dead, is because they have had DEAD MEN

PREACHING TO THEM." Again, "Boston * * has the form kept up very well, but has *lost much of the power of religion.* I have not heard of any remarkable stir in it for these many years."

In 1743, Rev. Messrs. Messenger and Haven, of Natick, say: "For *a long time past the power of godliness has been evident but in comparatively few instances.*"

Rev. John Porter, in 1743, says of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, "Experimental religion and the power of godliness seemed to have *taken their flight* from Bridgewater. The *greater part of the people* who thought of religion at all, rested in various duties short of a saving closure with Christ."

Rev. N. Leonard, of Plymouth, Mass., writing in 1744, says: "It pleased God to cast my lot in the first church and town in the country, twenty years ago. Religion was then (i. e. in 1724) *under a great decay; most people* seemed to be taken up principally about the world and the lusts of this life,

though there appeared some serious Christians among us who bewailed the growth of impiety, profaneness, Sabbath breaking, gaming, tavern-haunting, intemperance, and other evils, which threatened to bear down all that is good and sacred before them. We were sensible of an *awful degeneracy.* * * Iniquity prevailed, and we were in danger of losing the very form of godliness."

Rev. Samuel Davies, of Virginia, writes in 1751: "Religion has been, and in most parts of the colony still is, in a very low state. * * Family religion is a rarity. * * Vices of various kinds are triumphant, and even a form of godliness is not common."

Rev. Jonathan Dickenson, of Elizabethtown, New Jersey, says: "Religion was in a very low state, professors generally dead and lifeless, and the body of our people careless, carnal and secure. There was but little of the power of godliness appearing among us until some time in August, 1739, when there was a remarkable revival at Newark."

Of the Presbyterians throughout the land, in 1740, Mr. Tracy says they admitted "to the full communion of the church, persons who gave no evidence of regeneration. The doctrine of the new birth ceased to be regarded in the administration of the ordinances; * * as a natural consequence, it *practically slipped from the minds both of preachers and hearers.*"

Rev. S. Blair, of New Londonderry, Pennsylvania, in 1744, says: "People were very *generally, through the land,* careless at heart, and stupidly indifferent about the great concerns of eternity. There was very little appearance of any hearty engagedness in religion. * * It was sad to see with what a careless behavior the public ordinances were attended."

The eloquence and piety of Whitefield kindled a bright light in this hour of gloom; but being fed with Calvinistic theology only, it soon lost its brilliancy. The bones of that apostolic man were scarcely deposited in

their sepulchre at Newburyport, before another fearful apostacy spread the pall of death over the churches of America.* So that at the advent of American Methodism, the moral and spiritual condition of this country was scarcely better than that of the Fatherland when Wesley arose.

Thus, in both lands, Methodism rose like a bright, particular star, in an hour of deep and fearful gloom. What did it accomplish? In general terms, it may be replied that it was the instrument, in both countries, of a

* "With all the accession of strength," says Mr. Tracy, "that religion received from the revival, *it did but just stand the shock, (of the revolution,)* and *for a long time*, many of the pious feared that *everything holy would be swept away!*" Strengthened by so many tens of thousands of converts, and by the deep sense of the importance of religion produced in other tens of thousands, both in and out of the churches, religion survived, in time rallied and advanced, and is marching on to victory." *(Great Awakening, p. 421.)*

The *Puritan Recorder*, of August 31, 1854, describing the state of religion at the epoch of the revolution, confirms Mr. Tracy. It says: "It is well known how disastrous to religion were the influences attending that war, and what *wide spread religious declension followed.*"

revival of spiritual religion, which for depth, intensity, extent, permanency, duration, and humanitarian influences, has no parallel in the history of the Christian Church since the apostolic age.* Its results are not to be estimated by the numerical strength of the Methodistic body. Wonderful as is the creation of such a body of spiritual people in so brief a period, its results outside of its own membership are yet more vast and astonishing. Did it not break up the formalism of existing churches, and impregnate them anew with that divine life which not only saved them from extinction, but which also started them on a career of progress that continues to the present hour? Did it not stop the march of infidelity, and thereby save England from the revolutionary vortex which swal-

* Methodism gained more members to its own communion in its first century, than the apostolic church during *its* first century. At the end of the *first* century of the Christian Era, there were 500,000 Christians; at the end of its first century, Methodism had 1,423,000 communicants — a number nearly *three* times greater.

lowed so much of the blood of France? Did it not awaken that spirit of evangelical activity, which led to the conception and inauguration of the missionary and other ideas, now embodied in our various benevolent organizations? Did it not do much toward determining the religious condition of these United States? I do not claim that it did all these things *directly*; but I do claim that they have all grown out of the life to which it gave birth. They cannot be traced to any other cause. We can find their germ nowhere else but in the Methodistic revival: but for which one trembles to think what fearful moral desolation would have overspread the earth. That you may see how this view is supported by large minded men of other denominations, I will insert a few extracts from various sources below.*

* Dr. Morrison says: "The church of England received a mighty and hallowed impulse from the organization of Methodism. * * * In referring to the influence of Methodism upon Dissent, it will be frankly conceded, by all competent judges of passing events, that it has told with prodigious effect upon its

Nor has the spiritual life of Methodism yet begun to show symptoms of decay. Having lifted other sects up towards its own

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internal organization, and upon all its movements for the good of mankind. * * Methodism did much to bring on the great missionary crisis of the church. * * It was the glory of Methodism that it siezed with a giant grasp this great principle of the apostolic ministry."— *Dr. Morrison's Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society.*

Rev. Richard Cecil says: "They (the Methodists) have labored and not fainted in planting the gospel amongst the poor, and that with the most surprising success, even in the most dark and profligate places. * * Multitudes of genuine Christians could attest that under whatever denomination they now proceed, they owe their first serious impressions to the labors of these men." — *Cecil's Memoirs of Cadogan.*

Dr. Chalmers says: "Methodism is Christianity in earnest."

Robert Hall says: Whitefield and Wesley "will be hailed by posterity as the *Second Reformers of England.*"

Sir Peter Laurie, a British magistrate, in a speech, said "I would much rather see a Methodist chapel than a station house. I would that all the country might embrace your sentiments and emulate your moral character; for then, indeed, no police would be heard of."

Similar testimonies abound with respect to American Methodism. I will quote a few.

The following paragraph is from the pen of Dr. Baird, a gentleman whose extensive travel, and close and long continued observation on the various religious systems of the country, en-

standard, its superior vitality may not be so apparent as when they were shrouded in formality; yet it is as real and robust as

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title his opinion to the very highest respect. He says: "No American Christian, who takes a comprehensive view of the progress of religion in his country, and considers how wonderfully the means and instrumentalities employed are adapted to the extent and wants of that community, can hesitate for a moment to bless God for having, in his mercy, provided them all. Nor will he fail to recognize, *in the Methodist economy*, as well as in the zeal, the devoted piety, and the efficiency of its ministry, *one of the most powerful elements in the religious prosperity of the United States*, as well as one of the firmest pillars of their civil and political institutions."— *Religion in America*, p. 249.

Rev. Dr. Tyng, in an address in London, before the Wesleyan Missionary Society, in 1842, said: "I come from a land where we might as well forget the proud oaks that tower in our forests, the glorious capitol we have erected in the centre of our hills, or the principles of truth and liberty which we are endeavoring to disseminate, as forget the influence of Wesleyan Methodism, and *the benefits we have received thereby.* * * The Wesleyan body in our country is what the Wesleyan body is throughout the world. * * Standing, I was going to say, manfully, — but I check the spirit, and say humbly, — at the feet of Jesus, *laboring for him*, and *accounting it its highest honor if it may but bear the cross*, while he, in all his glory, should be permitted to wear the crown."

The next extract is from a writer in the *Presbyterian Christian Herald*, quoted in Clark's Memoir of Bishop Hedding: "No

ever. A recent writer in the *North British Review*, whose objections to some features of the Wesleyan system prove him to be not of it, says: "We believe that the Wesleyan body contains *by far the largest per centage of true religion and moral life of any sect in England.*" And you know, my dear convert, that, in this country, there is no room to doubt that the spiritual activity of Methodism is vastly greater and less vacillating than that of any other sect. A Congregational clergyman of Massachusetts, *naively* confessed this fact recently in a conversation with a Methodist preacher. He said: "We" (the Congregationalists) "always look to the Methodists to lead in a revival. I ad-

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pioneer gets beyond the reach of Methodist itinerants. Though he pass the Rocky Mountains, and pursue his game to the Pacific, he soon finds the self-denying, unconquerable, unescapeable Methodist minister at his side, summoning him to the camp-meeting, and winning his soul to Christ! Thousands upon thousands of pioneers, scattered like sheep and almost lost from the world, in those far-off wilds of the West, have blessed God for raising up Wesley and the Methodists."

vised the pastor of a Congregational church in a town where the church was large and wealthy, but had not enjoyed a revival within the memory of its oldest member, to secure, if he could, the organization of a Methodist church there, because such a church would certainly exert a most beneficial influence on the general spiritual interests of the town; and particularly on the spiritual life and vigor of that Congregational church." If every preacher of Calvinistic theology was as frank as this good brother, such confessions would be general. Thank God, Methodism retains the life God gave it when he converted the Wesleys; and if the culture of your spiritual life is the great object you seek in forming a church relation, you will regard it as the first of privileges to be permitted to enter its fellowship.

But the enemies of our church seek to divert attention from these wonderful and glorious facts, by pretending that in building up itself, Methodism inflicts injury on

society. It brings, they assert, vast numbers of persons under the influence of religious excitement, and induces them to make spurious professions of conversion. One unscrupulous writer has said that of the number professing conversion at Methodist meetings, "*nine-tenths* of the whole are found to be spurious, after a longer or shorter trial!" Strange assertion! It carries its own contradiction on its brazen brow. It is even *absurdly* false. To be true, no less than *twelve millions and a half* of persons, or *two-thirds of the adult population of the country,* must have professed conversion in Methodist churches, for they contain about a million and a quarter of communicants within their pale! A statement resulting in a consequence so manifestly impossible cannot be true. It is unworthy the serious attention of a sane man.*

* For a full and conclusive reply to the pretended facts by which this silly assertion of Parsons Cooke was supported, see my pamphlet entitled "A Defence of Methodism," &c.

But I need not lead you through the fog with which its enemies seek to obscure the glory of Methodism. You will not be deceived nor turned aside from it, I feel assured. You cannot fail to see that God is with it. His grace is its garment. His arm its power. His strength its protection. His love the pledge of its perpetuity. His approval the diadem of beauty which crowns its brow. Go, then, beloved; go, kneel at its altar; enter its fellowship; drink deep of its spirit; emulate the zeal and purity of its master spirits; and thereby learn the truth of the dying words of its great founder — *the best of all is, God is with us.*

CHAPTER IX.

METHODIST CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

DID you, my reader, ever visit the Hartz Mountain, in Germany? If so, you heard at least of the celebrated spectre which haunts its summit. Perhaps you saw it,—a colossal figure crowning the summit of the Brocken, bending and moving, as if in imitation of your own gestures. If you stretched out your arms, the spectre did the same. If you bowed, the spectre returned the compliment; and you were thrilled with astonishment at the phenomenon. Yet you were not alarmed. Your scientific knowledge taught you that the gigantic image before you was merely the shadow of yourself, projected on dense vapors or fleecy clouds, which had the power to reflect light freely. Yet such was the impression it made

upon your mind, that you were not surprised at the marvellous stories to which it had given rise among the peasantry of the adjacent region. You could readily understand how superstitious ignorance could invest that spectre with the terror with which the imagination delights to clothe supernatural beings.

Now it is a curious fact that the adversaries of Methodism, whenever they turn their eyes toward its government, affect to see a spectre resting upon its dome. They take strange delight in harping upon what they are pleased to call its despotism. Mr. Graves, whose malice floats like scum upon every page of his book, calls its government a "naked clerical despotism." Mr. Cooke, whose views of our system are founded on the most superficial knowledge of its principles, says, the "theory of our church assumes that God has given all church power to one or more bishops, to *reign absolute over the whole body of associated Christians in a nation!!*" Others take up the same cry, and

thus, from Maine to California, our adversaries assail us with this charge of despotism for their battle-cry. We think it possible some of them may be ignorant enough of Methodism to believe their own assertions. But with the more intelligent of our foes, this cry is raised for the purpose of raising the national prejudice against a church whose rapid growth and immense resources they both fear and envy. The numerical superiority of Methodism, as shown by the facts of the last census, has disturbed them exceedingly. Knowing that the republican idea is justly popular, and the despotic idea justly hateful with the American public, they seek to persuade the people that Methodism is anti-republican and despotic in its principles, spirit, and practice. Could they succeed, they would, doubtless, inflict a deadly wound upon it. They would assuredly retard its progress.

But the charge is false. Methodism is not a despotism, any more than the spectre of

the Brocken is a reality. Like that figure, the charge is proven to be a shadow — the reflection of the thoughts of those who make it — having no substantial existence. True, its ecclesiastical forms were not cast in a republican mould. The democratic idea is not very legibly written in the letter of its discipline. A superficial observer, gazing on some of its arrangements, without taking into account the numerous checks which are everywhere thrown around those to whom it conveys power, might easily misconceive its principles, and misjudge its spirit and practical operations. While, to those who write in the venomous spirit of the writers referred to above, nothing is easier than, by exaggerating some features of the system and suppressing others, to make out the plausible semblance of a strong case.

But there is a strong, and as we think, unanswerable *a priori* argument against this charge, in the fact that those who are in the M. E. Church are utterly unconscious of the

pressure of this alleged despotism. No Methodist feels oppressed by it. Methodist ministers and laymen maintain as much self-respect, feel as free in spirit, and are as unconstrained in their action, as the ministry and laity of the most ultra Congregationalist church in the land. No despotic arm terrifies them. No irresponsible authority oppresses them. No arbitrary inflictions gall them. How is this? How can this consciousness of freedom exist and flourish unchecked, if Methodism is such a system of despotism as its enemies declare it to be? It will not do to say that our people are not sufficiently intelligent to distinguish between liberty and freedom; for we hesitate not to assert that the *average* culture of our people is equal to that of any other large denomination in the land. How is it, then? There is but one answer. The despotism does not exist, save in the disturbed imaginations of our enemies.

What is despotism? It is absolute authority, irresponsible to constitutions, laws,

or tribunals. But Methodism knows no such authority as this. Every man — minister or layman — upon whom it confers power, is controlled by rules, and held responsible to proper tribunals for the right exercise of his authority. Every officer's duties, from a class leader to a bishop, are specifically defined; and the greater the power bestowed, the more strict is the responsibility which is exacted. Hence, while a member or preacher can be expelled for specific violations of the Discipline only, a bishop is liable to expulsion for *improper* conduct. Should a bishop foolishly undertake to enact the part of a tyrant, should he wantonly abuse his appointing power to any appreciable extent, the General Conference has the power, as it certainly would have the motive and inclination, to expel him. While such restraints upon its authorities as these exist, Methodism cannot be considered a despotism. The grand fundamental element of despotism — absolute, irresponsible authority — is not found in the system.

Again I ask, what is despotism? It is irresponsible authority *reposing upon force.* The appeal of the despot is not to the consent of the governed, but to force. His authority is built, not on the enlightened affection of his subjects, but on the bayonets of his warriors. His arguments are chains, prisons, scaffolds. To talk about a despotism without force, is to drivel, not reason. There can be no despotism where there is no power to coerce obedience.

Still our enemies say Methodism is a "naked clerical despotism, that its "bishops reign absolute over the whole body." Where then is its *coercive power?* Where its means of enforcing obedience? It has none, absolutely none. It reposes not on force, but on the opinions and choice of its members. This is its corner-stone. Robbed of this, it would dissolve like the "fabric of a vision." So entirely does it rely on the affectionate and voluntary support of the people, that it formally absolves them from *legal* obligation

to render it that pecuniary aid which is essential to its operations. If the allowances needful for the support of its ministry are not forthcoming, "the church," says the Discipline, p. 181, "shall *not* be accountable for the deficiency, as in a case of debt." Did the world ever hear of a despotism throwing itself so completely on the affections and choice of its subjects? Never. How then can Methodism be despotism?

But, it may be alleged, Methodism gives the power of excommunicating the laity to the clergy, and this ghostly power is equivocal to coercion in its influence over the membership. Such an allegation as this is sheer nonsense. To an enlightened people, excommunication *without just cause*, has no terror, because it cannot affect the spiritual relations of the sufferer. Such excommunication in this country is at most but an annoyance, and is not even dreamed of among Methodists as a motive to hold them to its communion.

But even this power is not lodged absolutely in the ministry of the M. E. Church. Before excommunication can take place, a layman must be formally tried and condemned by a committee of *laymen*. He can appeal from a wrong verdict to a Quarterly Conference, composed chiefly of *laymen*. He can finally procure the arrest of his pastor for mal-administration, at the bar of the Annual Conference. Hence, if there was terror in an unjust excommunication, our laity are pretty effectually guarded against it. The ministry cannot use the power of excommunication as a means of coercing the submission of the people. To what, then, does all the power actually lodged in the hands of the bishops and ministers of the M. E. Church amount? Restrained on every side by checks and accountability, it cannot be arbitrarily exercised without bringing censure or deposition upon him who is weak or wicked enough to abuse it. Reposing upon the affections and consent of the people, its abuse would

be its destruction. How then can Methodism be a despotism, when it is manifestly lacking in the fundamental elements of a despotic power?

A third element of despotism is *centralization*. A despotism seeks to "concentrate the whole administration of the government in its own hands." It abhors the municipal idea. It frowns upon all local authority which is not responsible to itself, and dependent upon its will. For example, free municipalities are unknown in the confessedly despotic government of Russia. Their existence is little better than nominal, in despotically governed France. They flourish only in such countries as enjoy a limited monarchy, like England, or republican institutions, like the United States. But despotism eschews them. It loathes all local authority which is not dependent on itself. Centralization is its law, and wherever it exists all authority proceeds from it, is responsible to it, and exists only by its permission.

But is Methodism a system of *centralization?* Does it hold its members in bands of iron responsibility to a single central power? Does any supreme authority restrain the liberties of individual societies, and deprive local churches of their proper freedom? If so, where is that central power? If, as our enemies say, Methodism is a despotism, let that overshadowing, all-controlling authority be named? It cannot be done.

If such a power exist at all, it must be found either in the *Episcopacy* or in the *General Conference.* To affirm it of an *Annual* Conference, would be to talk nonsense, because an Annual Conference is geographically limited in its jurisdiction. If it can be found anywhere, it must be in the Episcopacy, or in the General Conference. I affirm that it is not in either.

1. The Episcopacy is not such a power. *As a body,* the Episcopacy has no power at all. It is not recognized in Methodism in an

associate capacity.* If our *seven* bishops were to meet in solemn conclave, their decisions, opinions, or doings would possess no more authority over the church than the decisions of any other seven preachers, of equal character, age, and talent, in the connection. Whatever power they possess belongs to them *individually,* and not as a bench or conclave.

The power of a Methodist bishop is greatly overrated. Viewed through the spectacles of our adversaries, the Methodist bishop is a despot without a peer this side the Vatican. But when he is examined in the light of the Methodist Discipline, he becomes a simple preacher of the gospel, burdened with fearful responsibilities and onerous labors, but so fettered by restraints and accountability that he cannot enact the tyrant to any appreciable extent, without feeling the sharp axe of ecclesiastical deposition on his Episcopal neck.

* In the M. E. Church South, I believe the bench of bishops, as such, has certain powers. But they are clearly defined and limited by the Discipline of the Church.

What are the powers of a Methodist bishop? 1. He has the power of ordination. 2. He is, *ex officio*, the moderator of the General and Annual Conferences. 3. He decides all questions of law that may arise in an Annual Conference. 4. He can confine an Annual Conference to its legitimate functions. 5. He can change, receive, and suspend preachers during the interval of an Annual Conference. 6. He stations the preachers.

Now mark the limitations of these powers. 1. Has the bishop the power of ordination? Granted. But the Conferences only have the power to elect men to orders. Without their concurrence, therefore, a bishop cannot ordain a single candidate. 2. Is the bishop, *ex officio*, moderator in the Conferences? He is. But he has neither voice nor vote in the Conference itself. He can neither make a motion nor engage in debate. 3. Does he decide questions of law in an Annual Conference? He does; but the application of his

decision is with the Conference. His decision, if offensive to a single preacher, may be carried by appeal to the General Conference. In the General Conference he has no right to decide any question, either of law or order, but is in all things subject to the decisions of that body. 4. Can he confine an Annual Conference to its legitimate functions? He can. But those functions are specifically defined; and if he invades the rights of a Conference, he is accountable at the ensuing General Conference. 5. Can he change, receive and suspend preachers in the interval of a Conference? He can. But he must be governed by the necessity of the case in his exercise of the first two powers; and he cannot suspend, only as "Discipline may require;" that is, after due examination and conviction before a committee of preachers. 6. Has he power to station preachers? This, we confess, is a great power, but it involves such a fearful amount of responsibility to God, that its possessor must needs become a

very bad and very reckless man, before he could think of abusing it. But a bishop is responsible for its use to the delegates of the very men over whom it is exercised; and no bishop could abuse it to any serious degree without stirring up such a spirit of resistance as would result in great restrictions on the appointing power itself. The General Conference gave the stationing power to the bishops, and should they ever abuse it, it will assuredly take it from them.

Thus, on every side, the power of a bishop meets with limits which it dare not pass without self-destruction. Nor are these all the restraints which surround a bishop. He is dependent for the amount of his salary on the decisions of a committee of an Annual Conference. He is responsible for his private and official conduct to the General Conference, which may expel him for *improprieties* which would only subject a preacher or layman to censure. He has no power to appoint men to special offices in the

church, such as editorships, secretaryships, and book agencies. No layman, no minister, no Conference, is judicially responsible to him. He cannot hold the preacher he appoints to a station accountable to himself, but must leave him to the judgment of the brethren composing his Conference.

Now I submit the question to you, dear convert, in all candor, can this Episcopacy, so limited, so restrained, so utterly deprived of legislative and judicial powers be such a centralized power as is necessary to constitute a despotism? Did any man ever dream of despotism existing under such conditions? Nay. Is it not worse than absurd to say, as our Puritan adversary has recently said, Methodist bishops "reign absolute over the whole body?" The fact is, the bishops do not reign at all. They serve. Their authority is defined, limited, hemmed in on every side. They are not despots, and they could not be if they would.

We know it is urged by our enemies that

the bishops break down all these barriers, and hold the preachers and Conferences subservient to their will, through the influence they derive from their appointing power. If the bishop have "special ends of his own to carry," says a bitter foe to our institutions, "his will is irresistible. If he wishes to depose a member, he could if he would, command every vote."

This is mere babble. It only proves how ignorant its writer is, both of Methodist bishops and Methodist preachers. Were he acquainted with them, he would know that the former are too high and noble minded to use their power for personal ends, and too shrewd not to perceive that to so abuse their stationing power would be the sure way to lose it. That Methodist preachers will not take the "ministerial life" of one of their number to please a bishop, the history of New England Methodism most abundantly proves. They have too much self-respect and personal independence to submit to be

coerced into that, or any other act, by the stationing power. They would despise a bishop who should attempt to play the tyrant; and, if they saw fit, take the appointing power out of the hands of the Episcopacy altogether, and give it to a committee of their own election. It is, therefore, absolute nonsense for our enemies to prate about the despotism of Methodist bishops. They have no despotic power given them by the Discipline. They cannot arrogate such power by abusing the prerogatives of their office. Hence, as I have already said, they do not constitute such a centralized authority as is necessary to make Methodism a "naked clerical despotism."

Is the General Conference such a centralized authority as is implied in a despotism? I think not. What are the powers of the General Conference? 1. It has *legislative* authority — "full powers to make rules and regulations for our church." 2. It has a certain measure of *judicial* authority — it is a

high court of appeals from the judicial decisions of Annual Conferences; it is a court for the trial of bishops; it confers judicial powers on the Annual and Quarterly Conferences, and on the societies which constitute the church. 3. It possesses *executive* authority. It can elect and depose the bishops. It confers administrative powers on bishops, presiding elders, stationed preachers, stewards, and class leaders. These are large powers, we confess. Viewed apart from their limitations, they wear a despotic aspect. But it is neither just nor truthful to so regard them. They are not *absolute* and irresponsible powers; but they are so environed by restrictions and limitations, that notwithstanding their formidable appearance, they are not inconsistent with the liberties of both preachers and people.

Note then the limitations of these powers. 1. The six restrictive rules remove several most important subjects from the sphere of its legislative jurisdiction. By forbidding

it to change the doctrines and "General Rules," they deprive it of power to afflict the conscience of the church by forcing new opinions upon it, or to create any law for the government of its life, which is not already recognized in principle by the General Rules. Thus the religious faith and the moral duties of the church are not placed in the keeping of the General Conference, and may not be altered by its authority. The principle of Methodism is, that God has determined these great matters, and that ecclesiastical legislation can rightfully expound His teachings, and no more. The Methodistic exposition of them is in our articles of faith and General Rules, and the General Conference is forbidden to alter it, except in concurrence with the Annual Conferences. Hence the sphere for legislation by our General Conference is mostly limited to *disciplinary* regulations.

2. The *judicial* power of the General

Conference is also limited. It has *original* jurisdiction only over the bishops. It is only a court of appeals for travelling preachers. It cannot receive and try charges against a travelling preacher or a layman. The court for the trial of the former is his Annual Conference; for the latter, the "society" in which he holds his membership. Neither can the General Conference interfere directly with the action of the lower courts. With the "society," or its court of appeal, the Quarterly Conference, it has no means of intermeddling. The decisions of the latter body are final and conclusive, unless exception can be taken to the administration of the preacher presiding at the trial. In that case, his administration is subject to examination by the Annual Conference, and may be determined finally by appeal to the General Conference, whose decisions may, by possibility, lead to a reversal of the finding of the Quarterly Conference, and a new trial. Such a result,

however, will be an exception to ordinary rule. As a matter of fact, Methodist laymen are responsible to their peers only. They are not held judicially responsible to either the General or an Annual Conference. In regard to travelling preachers, their first responsibility is to their Conference, and unless their conduct is brought by appeal before the General Conference, that body has no jurisdiction over them. Is it not apparent from these facts, that the judicial authority of the General Conference is far from being absolute or despotic?

3. The *administrative* power of the General Conference is also limited. Its administrative powers are practically limited to the election and removal of bishops, and to the formation of rules for the conduct of the various administrators of its regulations provided for in the Discipline. But, let it be remembered, there is but one class of administrators *directly* responsible to it, viz., the bishops. Class leaders are responsible to

the preacher. Stewards to the Quarterly Conference. Preachers to their Annual Conferences. Presiding elders to the Bishops. The same thing is partially true of the *executive bodies* in the church. They are not so responsible to the General Conference as to be susceptible of coercion by it: the Quarterly Conference not being responsible to it at all, and the Annual Conferences only through the submission of their journals to it for examination and approval.

I know that it has been said that the General Conference could coerce a refractory or heretical Annual Conference, by directing the bishops to withdraw their administrations from it, or to scatter its members by transfers, and to substitute faithful men by the exercise of the same power. But the mention of these remedies only proves how weak the General Conference would be if brought into conflict with an Annual Conference, united on any great principle or measure; for are not both the remedies proposed,

suicidal acts? Does the Conference command the bishops to refuse their services to a Conference? What is that but cutting off one of its members, and thereby weakening itself. Such an act repeated thirty-nine times would annihilate it. The exercise of the transfer power to the extent proposed, we take to be practically impossible. It looks effectual enough in *theory*, but it could never be carried out in practice. It is idle to dream of it. What body of ministers would submit to it? What body of churches would consent to such a removal of their pastorate? How could such a substitution be made without almost disorganizing the work generally? Where could the men be found who would consent to occupy the territory of the refractory Conference under such circumstances? A scheme so hedged up with difficulties is not practicable, and its enunciation was a blunder. It will never be of use, save as an argument in the mouth of our foes, who delight to employ it in exhibiting

what they call the despotic capabilities of Methodism.

With these facts I submit the question to your good sense: — Can a Conference so limited, by constitutional restrictions, in the range of its legislative functions; so dependent for the enforcement and administration of its disciplinary regulations on tribunals and administrators not judicially responsible to itself, and whose action is in a great degree independent of it; so almost utterly deprived of coercive power, — can such a Conference be that centralized authority which men are wont to call a despotism? Was ever government with such limitations pronounced a despotism before? Never. Never, so long as it is powerless to impose a new dogma on the belief, or a new rule of life on the conscience; so long as it cannot arraign, try, or expel layman or minister; so long as the enforcement of its regulations depends on tribunals which it cannot coerce or control; so long, it must be monstrously

unjust and manifestly false to call it a "naked clerical despotism."

Thus, my reader, you see that none of the elements essential to a despotism can be found in any part of the system of Methodism. They are not found in its Annual Conferences, in its Episcopacy, nor in its General Conference. Can they then be found at all? Most assuredly they cannot; for the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church is not a despotism. Neither can it ever become such, so long as its existence depends on the consent and voluntary contributions of its members. Should it ever become oppressive, it would fall to pieces like a rope of sand. The people have but to withold pecuniary support, as they would and ought to do, if treated with injustice, and the fabric would tumble into fragments. Deprived of the support of the people, the dependent pastors would be compelled to vacate their pulpits, for the Conferences have no funds or other property

with which to support them. So long as the ministry is thus directly and absolutely dependent on the people, there is, there can be, no possibility of the Methodist Episcopal Church becoming a despotism.

It is sometimes said that the Methodist ministers either own or control the churches and parsonages erected by the people; that though this property is held by trustees, they are, in fact, appointed by and subject to the will of the pastor in office at the time. This is another misrepresentation. Our ministers neither own nor control church property, as you may see by turning to the chapter in the Discipline of the M. E. Church which describes the duties of "the Trustees." That chapter provides, 1. That the preacher in charge, or presiding elder of the district may create "a *new* board of trustees," to hold property for the M. E. Church, unless the laws of the State provide for their creation in some other way. Hence, in the absence of State laws, the *right to appoint*

new boards of trustees is lodged in our preachers. But where State laws provide otherwise, the Discipline unequivocally waives that right.

2. When a *vacancy* occurs in a board of trustees, it is the duty of the preacher or presiding elder to *nominate* another person to fill the vacancy. The *appointment* of the new trustee, however, is with the trustees. If they are equally divided, the preacher has the casting vote.

3. The trustees are not *responsible* to the preacher, presiding elder, Annual, or General Conference, but to the Quarterly Conference of their circuit or station — which Conference, as is well known, is constituted almost entirely of laymen.

4. Our ministry, says Bishop Baker, in his excellent "Guide Book," either in their individual or associated capacity, as Annual or General Conferences, have never claimed, nor do they hold, in law, any title to any chapel or parsonage by the deed of settle-

ment. The fee of the land is vested in trustees, who hold the property in behalf of each respective society. The General Conference claims merely the right to supply the pulpit, by such means as it shall elect, with duly accredited ministers and preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, "who shall preach and expound God's holy word therein." The General Conference of 1796, referring to the Deed of Settlement, adopted the following sentiments: "By which we manifest to the whole world that the property of the preaching houses will not be invested in the General Conference. But the preservation of our union, and the progress of the work of God, indispensably require that the free and full use of the pulpit should be in the hands of the General Conference and the yearly Conferences authorized by them. Of course, the travelling preachers who are in full connexion, assembled in their Conferences, are the patrons of the pulpits of our churches." *Rec. Gen. Conf.*,

p. 15. And if any chapel or parsonage is sold by the trustees to liquidate their debts, the surplus money, after cancelling the debts, must be appropriated by the Annual Conference, "according to the best of their judgment, *for the use of the said society.*"

From these facts it is obvious that the assertion stated above is utterly groundless. Our trustees are not "*appointed* by the pastor in office," (except when a *new board* is to be appointed in States which have no statute otherwise providing.) They are not subjected to the will of the pastor in office, for they are not *responsible* to him, nor can they be in any way controlled by him. The only right which Methodist ministers can legally enforce in our church property is that of preaching in the pulpits of our churches, and occupying our parsonages according to the intention of those who contributed monies for their erection. Can any man show the injustice, or even the impropriety of such a claim? It cannot be done.

To comprehend and appreciate the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church, you must view it from the same standpoint as they who constructed it. From that point alone, can you rationally expect to see it in its beauty, fitness, and excellence. If you study it from any other position, it will only perplex and confound you; because you will fail to discover the motives and aims which it embodies. Those motives and those aims are the keys which unlock its gates, and unfold its wonderful adaptations to all candid beholders. Only seize them, and like Christian and Hopeful with their key of faith in the castle of Giant Despair, you will escape from the dungeon of perplexity in which those who assail it without understanding it would fain lock you up for ever.

What then, are the motives and aims incorporated in it? You have but to refer to the life of Wesley, and the answer is yours. What great motive roused him to abandon the cloisters of Oxford and to devote himself

to the work of an Evangelist? Did he not say, like Paul, the love of Christ constraineth me? That was his *motive* — the love of souls proceeding from the love of Christ. What was his *object?* To spread scriptural holiness over the land and the world! To these ideas, he and his coadjutors conformed the ecclesiastical system which they constructed, both in England and America. They regarded it, as an organization for the propagation of the gospel and the culture of piety in the individual heart. They took its *laws* from the Bible, which is the great constitution and statute book of Methodism. They framed its *discipline*, rather as a code of by-laws to provide for the execution of the divine statutes, than as a book of legislative canons. Hence, nearly everything in the discipline relates to the constitution of a series of *executive* bodies and officers charged with the execution, not of Mr. Wesley's laws, but of the precepts of Christ. The classes, love feasts, and prayer meetings are for the fulfil-

ment of Christ's law of Christian fellowship; the board meeting, the Quarterly Conference, and the Annual Conference, are chiefly to secure wholesome discipline, and to make such secular and other provisions as may be necessary to the maintenance of a visible organization of Christians. The General Conference is a legislative body, only so far as it determines for the church what moral practices the precepts of Christ require it to enforce, and what to reject; and what executive methods are best fitted to accomplish the grand end of the organization. In fact, many of its provisions under the latter head are merely *advisory;* for their observance is enforced by no penalty. All its rituals; its rules on preaching, on visiting from house to house, on the employment of time; its directions concerning public worship, singing, band societies, dress, marriages, &c., fall into this category. Thus its discipline is, as the name imports, more a book of provisions for the enforcement of the laws of Christ and the

propagation of the gospel, than a code of legislative canons for the direction of the life. He who reads it aright will see its grand purpose to engage the whole church in unceasing effort to evangelize the world, standing out in bold relief on every page. He will see this purpose applied, with little regard to individual interests, tastes, or preferences. No provision is made for the toleration of indolence, ambition, or any other form of selfishness. Everything is made to yield to the demands of the spiritual nature and the requirements of a vigorous gospel propagandism.

How beautifully is this illustrated in its *itinerancy*. Observing in the history of the primitive church, that it was most pure and most successful, when its ministry contained a large corps of *evangelists;* and that when evangelists generally became pastors, they lost both their piety and efficiency, Mr. Wesley seized on the idea of a ministry composed entirely of evangelists or itiner-

ants. He saw that such a ministry would require great personal sacrifices on the part of the ministry, and severe trials of feeling on the part of the churches. The former must abandon the idea of a permanent and real home on earth; must consent to the systematic disruption of the social affections; must resign the quiet opportunities for intellectual culture and social influence which the permanent pastorate so abundantly provides; must expose their families to the social and educational evils inseparable from a pilgrim life; must accept, in a word, a life of incessant labor, unrest, and change. The churches, too, must be sorely tried in *feeling* by such a system, though their trials are nothing when compared to those of the ministry. Mr. Wesley saw all this. But he also saw, that all these evils were outweighed by the superior vitality, activity, and spiritual results likely to proceed from it, and, therefore, he adopted it and recommended the American Methodists to do the same. Thus

far, the result has justified his expectation. The Methodist itinerancy has been the most successful body of ministers known to the church since the day of Pentecost.

Some persons will tell you, it would be better if Methodism admitted the *laity* to a more direct participation in the government of the church than it now does. Perhaps it would. I see but one real objection to the idea; but that is a very strong one. It does not appear *practicable*, unless some other very marked and doubtful changes are also made. By degrees, however, it may be done. The idea is gaining ground. Our ministry is fast yielding the management of the financial matters of the church to its laymen. It is inviting their coöperation in such parts of the business of an Annual Conference as admits of it. It interferes very little in the fiscal affairs of individual churches. In fact, it is my opinion that, in our local churches, the laity generally have more to do with their management, than

they do in Congregational churches. Our "boards" and "Quarterly Conferences" usually comprise a majority of the effective and active portion of the male membership, and they determine all important matters that come up in their respective churches; while in Congregational churches, notwithstanding the nominal parity of their members, most of their affairs are practically controlled by the deacons and two or three other influential men. Besides, our laity create the ministry; for no man can become a minister without the vote of a Quarterly Conference. With the Congregationalists, the clergy alone determine who shall be admitted to their number. So, too, in the choice of a pastor, though our churches consent to receive their preacher at the hands of a bishop, yet their wishes are always considered and yielded to if possible. They certainly obtain the man of their choice as frequently as our Congregational brethren do, and without the expense and difficulty which with them are insepar-

able from a change of pastors. *Theoretically* their system yields more to the laity than ours; *practically* there is no church which furnishes freer scope for the activity, or defers more to the choice, of its laymen than ours.

I have now shown you that the government of Methodism is not a despotism; that it cannot become so without self destruction, because its principal support depends on the purely voluntary contributions of the laity; that its ruling motive, object, and results justify its peculiarities; and that though it does not yield so much power in *theory* to laymen, as some other systems, it actually concedes much in *practice*. These views will, I hope, satisfy you, that the attacks of our enemies are founded more in ignorance or malice, than in truth and fact. It would be easy to meet all their specific allegations in detail, but it is unnecessary in your case. What I have said is sufficient to convince you, that you have no possible risk of personal oppression in the

M. E. Church;* that the only pressure you can ever experience from its government, will come in the form of effort to promote your holiness and usefulness, which is precisely what *you* desire. Hence, to *you*, its government will be as acceptable, as its doctrines are precious.

And now, beloved convert, adieu! Though strangers to each other, in the flesh, I trust we now feel one in spirit. This being so, you will follow the advice of my unpretending book, and become a willing member of the great Methodist Communion; in which case, I trust, we shall remain fellow travellers in the way of holiness, until we meet in the world of spirits. Should it then appear that my advice contributed to your glorious destiny, we will rejoice together, returning thanks to Him whose spirit led me to write and you to read. Until then, fare thee well.

* For full information on the controverted points in Methodist church government see Church Polity by Abel Stevens, Polity of Methodism by Dr. Hodgson, Original Church of Christ by Dr. Bangs, &c., &c.

APPENDIX, NO. I.

The following logical paragraph gives a clear and satisfactory view of the difference between the theory which in theology is known as Pelagianism, and the evangelical Arminianism taught by the M. E. Church. It is taken from Watson's Dictionary:

The followers of the truly evangelical Arminius, or those who hold the tenet of general redemption with its concomitants, have often been greatly traduced, by the ignorant among their doctrinal opponents, as Pelagians, or at least as Semi-Pelagians. It may therefore serve the cause of truth to exhibit the appropriate reply which the Dutch Arminians gave to this charge when urged against them at the Synod of Dort, and which they vindicated and maintained by arguments and authorities that were unanswerable. In their concluding observations they say, "From all these remarks, a judgment may easily be formed at what an immense distance our sentiments stand from the dogmatical assertions of the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians *on the grace of God in the conversion of man*. Pelagius, in the first instance, attributed all things to nature: but we acknowledge nothing but grace. When Pelagius was blamed for not acknowledging grace, he began indeed to speak of it, but it is evident that by grace he understood the power of nature, as created by God, that is, the rational will; but by grace we understand a supernatural gift. Pelagius, when afterwards pressed with passages of Scripture, also admitted this supernatural grace; but he placed it solely in the external teaching of the law: though we affirm that God offers his word to men, yet we likewise affirm that he inwardly causes the understanding to believe. Subsequently, Pelagius joined to this external grace, *that by which sins are pardoned*: we acknowledge not only the grace by which sins are for-

given, but also that by which men are assisted to refrain from the commission of sin. In addition to his previous concessions, Pelagius granted, that the grace of Christ was requisite, beside the two kinds which he had enumerated; but he attributed it entirely to the doctrine and example of Christ that we are aided in our endeavors not to commit sin: we likewise admit that the doctrine and example of Christ afford us some aid in refraining from sin, but in addition to their influence we also place the gift of the Holy Spirit, with which God endues us, and which enlightens our understandings, and confers strength and power upon our will to abstain from sinning. When Pelagius afterward owned the assistance of divine power inwardly working in man by the Holy Spirit, he placed it solely in the enlightening of the understanding; but we believe, that it is not only necessary for us to know or understand what we ought to do, but that it is also requisite for us to implore the aid of the Holy Spirit that we may be rendered capable of performing, and may delight in the performance of, that which it is our duty to do. Pelagius admitted grace,—but it has been a question with some whether he meant only illumination, or, beside this, a power communicated to the will;—he admitted grace, but he did this only to show that by means of it man can with greater ease act aright: we, on the contrary, affirm that grace is bestowed, not that we may be able with greater ease to act aright, (which is as though we can do this even without grace,) but that grace is absolutely necessary to enable us to act at all aright. Pelagius asserted, that man, so far from requiring the aid of grace for the performance of good actions, is, through the powers implanted in him at the time of his creation, capable of fulfilling the whole law, of loving God, and of overcoming all temptations; we, on the contrary, assert that the grace of God is required for the performance of every act of piety. Pelagius declared, that by the works of nature man renders himself worthy of grace; but we, in common with the church universal, condemn this dogma. When Pelagius afterward himself condemned this tenet, he understood by grace, partly

natural grace, which is antecedent to all merit, and partly remission of sins, which he acknowledged to be gratuitous; but he added, that through works performed by the powers of nature alone, at least through the desire of good and the imperfect longing after it, men merit that spiritual grace by which they are assisted in good works: but we declare, that men will that which is good on account of God's prevenience or going before them by his grace, and exciting within them a longing after good: otherwise grace would no longer be grace, because it would not be gratuitously bestowed, but only *on account of the merit of man*." That many who have held some tenets in common with the true Arminians have been, in different degrees, followers of Pelagius, is well known: but the original Arminians were in truth as far from Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian errors, granting the opinions of Pelagius to be fairly reported by his adversaries, as the Calvinists themselves. This is also the case with the whole body of Wesleyan Methodists, and of the cognate societies to which they have given rise, both in Great Britain and America.

APPENDIX, NO. II.

CALVINISM IN 1855.

That my reader may judge of Calvinism as now taught by some of its advocates, I copy the following extracts from the "Confession of Faith and Form of Covenant, of the Old South Church in Boston, Massachusetts." The edition from which I take these extracts is from the press of Crocker & Brewster, and bears the date of

1855. I have italicised several sentences which are worthy of special note, because they contain the most ultra aspects of Calvinism.

OF GOD'S ETERNAL DECREE.

God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet *hath he not decreed anything, because he foresaw it as future*, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

3. By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, *and others foreordained to everlasting death.*

4. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and *their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.*

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he by the eternal and most free purpose of his will foreordained all the means thereunto; wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation.

Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, BUT THE ELECT ONLY.

7. *The rest of mankind God was pleased,* according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extended or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, *to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.*

OF EFFECTUAL CALLING.

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, *and those only,* he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by word and spirit out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone and giving unto them an heart of flesh, renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, *who is altogether passive therein* until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

3. *Elect infants dying in infancy,* are regenerated and saved by Christ, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth; so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the world.

Others not elected although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither do nor can come unto Christ,

and therefore cannot be saved; much less can men not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives, according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.

OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, CAN *neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall* CERTAINLY *persevere therein to this end, and be eternally saved.*

2. This perseverance of the saints *depends not upon their own free will*, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, and union with him; the oath of God, the abiding of his Spirit, and the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace, from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

3. And though they may, through the temptation of Satan, and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves; yet they are and shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

APPENDIX, NO. III.

The following extracts, from standard expositors of Calvinism, are submitted to the reader to prove that "infant damnation" is a doctrine which the fathers of Calvinism regarded as a logical sequence of their principles: though very few Calvinists of the present day are willing to accept such a horrid dogma, albeit it is logically contained in every form of Calvinistic theology.

AUGUSTINE, the inventor of the scheme of unconditional election, says: —

"It may therefore be truly said that INFANTS dying without baptism, WILL BE IN A STATE OF DAMNATION of all the most mild. But, *greatly does he deceive* and *is he deceived* who affirms that they WILL NOT BE DAMNED." — *Augustine De Peccat. Merit. et Remiss Lib. i., c.* 16.

Again, in his sermon on baptism, Augustine says: —

"We affirm that they (infants) *will not be saved and have eternal life*, except they be baptized in Christ." — *De Baptismo Parvulorum Contra Pelagianos Sermo D.*

After showing that infants are admitted to the kingdom of God by baptism, he adds: —

"Whosoever does not belong to the kingdom of God, must, without doubt, belong to the number of the damned. The Lord will come, and, about to judge the living and the dead, will, according to the gospel, make two divisions, the right and the left. To those on the left he will say, *Depart into* EVERLASTING FIRE *prepared for the devil and his angels.* To those on the right he will say, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* The one he calls a kingdom, the other damnation with the devil. THERE IS NO MIDDLE PLACE LEFT WHERE YOU CAN PUT INFANTS. Behold, on the right is the kingdom of heaven. *Inherit*, he says, the *kingdom*. He who is not there, is on the left. What will happen on the left? *Depart into everlasting fire.* On the right an eternal

kingdom; on the left, everlasting fire. He that is not on the right, will indisputably be on the left. Therefore *he that is not in the kingdom*, IS DOUBTLESS IN ETERNAL FIRE. Certainly he cannot have eternal life, who is not baptized; he will not be on the right, that is, he will not be in the kingdom.

"Behold, he [the Lord] has explained to you what is the kingdom, and what is everlasting fire, so that when you confess that an INFANT will not be in the kingdom, you may allow that HE WILL BE IN ETERNAL FIRE.

"I feel that this question is a profound one, and I own that my powers are not sufficient to fathom its depths. I must here be content to exclaim with Paul, *O the depth of the riches!* AN UNBAPTIZED INFANT GOES TO DAMNATION."—*Ibid.* 14, *Capp.* 2, 3, 4, & 7.

FULGENTIUS, a theologian of the school of Augustine, gives the following as one of the articles of the Orthodox faith:—

"Most firmly hold, and by no means doubt, not only that men who have come to the use of reason, but also that INFANTS, whether they begin to live in their mother's wombs *and there die*, or, after being born pass from this life without the sacrament of holy baptism, which is given in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, WILL BE PUNISHED WITH THE EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT OF ETERNAL FIRE; because, although they had no sin of their own committing, they have nevertheless incurred by their carnal conception and nativity, the damnation of original sin."—*Fulgentius de fide ad Pet. Diac, cap.* 27.

CALVIN, in his Theological Tracts, addresses Sebastian Castalio, for teaching that all laws, human and divine, condemn a man *after* and because of transgression, in the following words:—

"You deny that it is just in God to damn any one, unless on account of transgression. Persons innumerable are taken out of life while yet infants. Put forth now your virulence against *God who* PRECIPITATES INTO ETERNAL DEATH HARMLESS INFANTS (*innocuos fœtus*) TORN FROM THEIR MOTHERS' BREASTS. He who will not detest this blasphemy [of yours] when it is only exposed, may curse me at his will. For it cannot be demanded that I should be safe and free from the abuse of those who do not spare God."—*Tracts Theol.—Calumniæ Nebulonis, &c., art.* 14.

Once more Calvin says:—

"What other than the *good pleasure of God* is the cause why the fall of Adam involved in eternal and remediless death whole nations, with their INFANT OFFSPRING? I confess that it is indeed a *horrible decree*."—*Nichol's Calvinism and Arminianism Compared, part* I., *p.* 19.

EDWARDS, whose authority as an expounder of Calvinism is above dispute, says: —

"We may well argue from these things, that INFANTS are not looked upon by God as sinless, but that they are by nature children of wrath, seeing this terrible evil comes so heavily on mankind in infancy. But besides these things, which are observable concerning the mortality of infants in general, there are some particular cases of the death of infants which the scripture sets before us, that are attended with circumstances, in a peculiar manner giving evidences of the sinfulness of such, and their just exposedness to divine wrath. As particularly,

"The destroying of the INFANTS in Sodom, and the neighboring cities; which cities, destroyed in so extraordinary, miraculous, and awful a manner, are set forth as a signal example of God's dreadful vengeance for sin, to the world in all generations; agreeable to that of the apostle, Jude, verse 7."

The text here referred to, is in these words: — "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, SUFFERING THE VENGEANCE OF ETERNAL FIRE."

To show that he believed these poor infantile victims found no relief in the future, he adds: —

"To say here, that God could make it up to those infants in another world, must be an insufficient reply. For so he could as easily have made it up to Lot, or to ten or fifty righteous if they had been destroyed in the same fire: Nevertheless, it is plainly signified, *that this would not have been agreeable to the wise and holy proceedings of the judge of all the earth.*"— *Edwards' Works, vol. 6, pp. 252–254.*

BELLAMY, the friend and disciple of Edwards, says:

"It was at God's sovereign election, to give every child of Adam born in a Christian land, *opportunity to hear*, to hear the glad tidings, or only to grant this to some, while *others die in infancy, and never hear*. Those who die in infancy, may as justly be held under law in the next world, as those that live may in this. God is under no more obligations to save those that die, than he is to save those that live; to grant the generating influences of his spirit to them, than he is to these."—*Bellamy's Works, vol. 2, pp. 369, 370.*

ZANCHIUS, who has always stood high among Calvinist writers, says: —

"Says Pighius: 'Infants are without actual sin. Therefore, although exiles from the kingdom of heaven, they will not be damned, nor receive any punishment of sense, except those of them who in the course of nature sin, either in their external or internal senses [*nisi etiam qui sensibus internis vel externis naturaliter peccant*]'

"I answer. They are nevertheless wicked, and being born adapted to sin, AND THEREFORE JUSTLY DAMNED, although they have not yet sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. For as temporal death came upon them on account of original sin, SO DID ALSO ETERNAL; for God threatened both when he said: 'In dying you shall die.' *Even young serpents and the whelps of wolves*, who cannot as yet harm anybody, are put to death, and with justice. How so? Because they are of such a nature, that they easily can do harm. Therefore even INFANTS ARE DESERVEDLY DAMNED, on account of the *nature they have*, to wit, a wicked nature and repugnant to the laws of God."—*Op. Theol. D. Hieron. Zanchii, Tom.* 4, *Lib.* 1, *De Peccat. Orig. Cap.* 4, *thes.* 5.

THE SYNOD AT CAMBRIDGE, 1648, representing the Puritan churches of New England, unanimously adopted the confession of faith published by the Westminster Assembly. The churches of Connecticut did the same at Saybrook, in 1608. The Presbyterian Church in the United States holds it as its confession. And this confession contains the following language:—

"*Elect* infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.

"*Others not elected*, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore *cannot be saved;* much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested."

The Helvetic divines express their views in these emphatic words:—

"That there is election AND REPROBATION OF INFANTS as well as of adults, WE CANNOT DENY AGAINST GOD, who tenderly loves, and *inculpably* HATES them before they are born."—*Acta Dordrechtana Judicia Theologorum Exteriorum, p.* 50.

ARCHBISHOP USHER, in his Body of Divinity, p. 165, ed. 1702, says:—

"*How does God suffer them to run into condemnation?*

"In a divers manner: Some REPROBATES DYING INFANTS, others of riper years, of which latter sort some are not called, others called.

"*How doth God deal with reprobates dying infants?*

"Being once conceived, they are in a state of death, (Rom. 5:14,) by reason of the sin of Adam imputed, and of original corruption cleaving to their nature, wherein also DYING THEY PERISH. As (for instance) the children of heathen parents."

The German doctors, Deodatus and Tranchinus, professors of theology, said: —

"*Of the infants of believers* ONLY, who die of an age before they can be indoctrinated, we determine that they are saved."—*Acta Dordrechtana Judicia Theologorum Exteriorum, p.* 58.

ARTHUR HILDERSHAM says: —

"It is evident that God hath witnessed his wrath against the sin of infants, not only by hating their sin, but even their *persons* also, (Rom. 9: 11, 13.) And not only by inflicting temporal punishments upon them, but even by CASTING THEM INTO HELL. For of those that perished in Sodom and Gomorrah, it is expressly said, (Jude 7,) that they were not only consumed with fire and brimstone, but that they suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. And the Apostle proving infants to be sinners by this arguments, because death reigneth over them, (Rom. 5: 14,) showeth plainly he meaneth not a temporal death only, but such as he calleth condemnation (*v.* 16); there is then a natural proneness, disposition and inclination to everything that is evil, as there is in the youngest whelp of a lion, or of a bear, or of a wolf, unto cruelty, or in the very egg of a cockatrice, before it is hatched. Against these damnable errors, one of which is that all who die in their infancy shall certainly go to heaven, I have heard it evidently proved, 1. That all infants are sinners, and deserve damnation. 2. That many infants have been vessels of wrath, and FIREBRANDS OF HELL." *Master Hildersham's Lectures on the* 51*st Psalm, pp.* 280, 281, *Ed.* 1635.

TWISS, proluentor of the Westminster Assembly, says: —

"Many thousands, even all the INFANTS of Turks and Saracens dying in original sin, are TORMENTED BY HIM (the Deity) IN HELL FIRE, is he to be accounted the father of cruelties for this?" Again "touching punishment in hell, it is either spoken of infants or men of riper years—of infants departing in infancy; if guilty of eternal death, 'tis no injustice to inflict it, and though he be slow to anger toward some, yet it is not necessary he should be so to others." Again, it is true *many infants we say perish in original sin only*, not living to be guilty of any actual sin of their persons. Once more: "Every man that is damned, it is for original, as well as actual sins, and MANY THOUSAND INFANTS ONLY FOR ORIGINAL!" *The riches of God's love, unto the vessels of mercy, consistent with his absolute hatred or reprobation of the vessels of wrath.—Fol. ed.* 1653, *pp.* 39, 135, 136.

I close these quotations, which, by the way, are only specimens of much more of the same sort, with an extract from Wigglesworth's "Day of Doom," which, as you know, was once as familiar as the catechism in New England, and which, without doubt, represented the current theology.

According to the marginal note, "reprobate infants" plead for themselves thus: —

"Then to the bar all they drew near
Who died in infancy,
And never had or good or bad
Effected personally;
But from the womb unto the tomb
Were straightway carried,
(Or at the last ere they transgress'd)
Who thus began to plead:

"'If for our transgression,
Or disobedience,
We here did stand at thy LEFT HAND,
Just were the recompense:
But Adam's guilt our souls hath spilt,
His fault is charged on us;
And that alone hath overthrown,
And utterly undone us.

"'Not we, but he, ate of the tree,
Whose fruit was interdicted;
Yet on us all of his sad fall,
The punishment 's inflicted;
How could we sin that had not been,
Or how is his sin our
Without consent, which to prevent,
We never had a power?

* * * * * * *

"'Behold we see Adam set free,
And saved from his trespass,
Whose sinful fall hath spilt us all,
And brought us to this pass.
Canst thou deny us once to try,
Or grace to us to tender,
When he finds grace before thy face,
That was the chief offender?'"

Another marginal note tells us that their "arguments are *taken off*," by the Judge, thus: —

"Then answered the Judge most dread,
God doth such doom forbid,
That men should die eternally
For what they never did.
But what you call old Adam's fall,
And only his trespass,
You call amiss to call it his,
Both his and yours it was.

"'He was design'd of all mankind
To be a public head,
A common root whence all should shoot.
And stood in all their stead.
He stood and fell, did ill or well,
Not for himself alone,
But for you all, who now his fall,
And trespass would disown.

"'If he had stood, then all his brood
Had been established
In God's true love, never to move,
Nor once awry to tread;
Then all his race, my Father's grace,
Should have enjoy'd forever,
And wicked sprites by subtle slights
Could them have harmed never.

* * * * * * *

"'You sinners are, and such a share
As sinners may expect,
Such you shall have; for I do save
None but my own elect.
Yet to compare your sin with their
Who lived a longer time,
I do confess yours is much less,
Though every sin 's a crime.

"'A crime it is, *therefore in bliss*
You may not hope to dwell;
But unto you I shall allow
The easiest room in hell.'
The glorious King thus answering,
They cease and plead no longer:
Their consciences must needs confess
His reasons are the stronger.

"Thus all men's pleas the Judge with ease,
Doth answer and confute,
Until that all, both great *and small*,
Are silenced and mute.
Vain hopes are cropt, all mouths are stopt,
Sinners have nought to say,
But that 't is just, and equal most
They should be DAMN'D FOR AY."

What Wigglesworth thought of the "easiest room in hell," may be gathered from the following stanza: —

"But who can tell the plagues of Hell,
And torments exquisite?
Who can relate their dismal state,
And terrors infinite?
Who fare the best, and feel the least,
Yet feel that punishment,
Whereby to nought they should be brought
If God did not prevent."

Wigglesworth, Day of Doom, sixth edition, 1715.

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